K Ostervald (J. F.)

THE

ARGUMENTS

OF THE

BOOKS and CHAPTERS

OF THE

OLD and NEW

TESTAMENT,

With Practical OBSERVATIONS.

Written Originally in FRENCH,

By the Reverend Mr. OSTERVALD,

Profeſſor of Divinity, and one of the Miniſters of the Church at NEUFCHÂTEL, in SWISSERLAND: And by him preſented to the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,

Tranſlated by

JOHN CHAMBERLAYNE, Eſq;

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MDCCLXXIX.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO HER

ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCESS

OF

WALES.

MADAM,

THE following *Arguments and Obſervations upon the Old Teſtament*, originally compoſed in *French* by an eminent Divine of *Neufchatel*, and now tranſlated into *Engliſh* by one of our own Members, we humbly beg leave to lay before your Royal Highneſs.

BOOKS of this nature are never out of ſeaſon: As they are wrote upon the ſacred Oracles, ſo they derive a certain luſtre from their Original, and there-

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by recommend themſelves, at leaſt to thoſe, to whom the divine Word is ſweeter than honey, and dearer than thouſands of gold and ſilver. This was the taſte the Royal Prophet had of thoſe ſaving teſtimonies in his time, when he wiſely choſe them to be his *delight*, and his *councellors*.

As your Royal Highneſs has given early and convincing proofs of your love to the ſame Word, and of your zeal to be guided thereby, through the temptations of an evil world; ſo we are perſuaded, that a treatiſe, tending to the ſpiritual improvement of the mind, by explaining that Word of truth, will meet with a favourable reception from your Royal hands; and your illuſtrious name prefixed to it, gain the more upon thoſe who ſtand in need of ſuch aſſiſtances.

THIS conſideration emboldens us to inſcribe theſe ſheets to your Royal Highneſs, not ſo much to furniſh you with new matter of knowledge, wherewith your princely mind is already ſo richly adorned, as to lay before you an inſtance

inſtance of the endeavours that are uſed to promote unfeigned Religion; to which the Holy Writings muſt needs be moſt conducive; eſpecially, if the Reader conſult them with an intent, not only to inform his judgment, but to ſtir up his will to a fervent deſire, that he may digeſt in his heart, and expreſs in his life, the important truths therein contained.

ANOTHER very engaging motive to this addreſs, is the profound reſpect we bear to your illuſtrious perſon, of whoſe protection and countenance we ſhall be always highly ambitious, in carrying on a work, which, we hope, may not be thought unworthy the Patronage of ſo great and pious a Princeſs.

MAY GOD Almighty, the great rewarder of all goodneſs, who hath raiſed your Royal Highneſs to ſo eminent a dignity, crown your ſtedfaſt adherence to the Proteſtant cauſe with freſh ſupplies of his grace, and make you a ſucceſsful inſtrument of promoting ſuch a unity, as may effectually

 ſtrengthen

ſtrengthen the intereſt of true Religion.

MAY the ſame good GOD guide you by his Spirit, guard you by his power, comfort you by his preſence, and after having long, very long continued you a moſt ſhining pattern of holineſs here, tranſlate you to that kingdom which cannot be moved. Theſe are the moſt ardent Prayers of,

MADAM,

Your Royal Highneſs's

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Moſt Obedient, and

Moſt Devoted

Humble Servants,

The SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

ADVERTISEMENT,

Prefixed to the laſt Edition of the BIBLE, publiſhed with the Reverend Mr. *Oſtervald*'s ARGUMENTS and REFLECTIONS, at *Neufchatel*, in the year 1744 *.

WHEN the Liturgy, *compoſed for the uſe of the churches at* Neufchatel, *was publiſhed, about thirty years ago, it was obſerved in the Preface, that one principal deſign of that Liturgy, was to make the reading of the Holy Scriptures a regular part of the public worſhip; and*

* It was thought expedient to place this *Advertiſement* at the head of the following Tranſlation; not that it ſuits, in every reſpect, the *Engliſh* Edition, but becauſe the author thought fit to introduce his *Preliminary Diſcourſe* with it; and chiefly, becauſe it preſents the reader with a brief account of the ſeveral improvements made in this work, from its firſt appearance in the world, in the year 1716, to the laſt Edition at *Neufchatel*, in 1774. In which laſt, there are Arguments and Reflections added to a great number of chapters which had none before, beſides additions and alterations made in almoſt all the reſt; ſo that the following Tranſlation, which contains all the additions and improvements of the laſt *French* Edition, may be now looked upon as the moſt uſeful companion for the Scriptures, and the beſt human means that perhaps was ever invented, to make thoſe divine books produce in us the ſalutary effects for which they were graciouſly deſigned; the pious reader of the Scriptures being furniſhed with ſuitable Reflections upon almoſt every chapter in the Bible. The chapters that are ſtill without Reflections, are in number very inconſiderable; ſince in the whole Old and New Teſtament, there are but twenty-eight; *viz.* The *Song of Solomon*, containing eight chapters, the nine laſt chapters of *Ezekiel*, and eleven in the *Revelations* of St. *John*.

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that, to render the reading of them more uſeful, it was thought expedient to add to the chapters, which were appointed to be read in public, Arguments, *pointing out the contents of each chapter, and* Reflections, *ſhewing the uſe and improvement to be made of it. We ſhall not here trouble the reader with the reaſons which induced us to make uſe of this method: it ſhall only be obſerved, that when theſe Arguments and Reflections were firſt compoſed, as they were deſigned only for the particular uſe of the churches of* Neufchatel, *the author had no thought of making them public: But when ſeveral copies of them were diſperſed, and the illuſtrious* Society *at* London for promoting Chriſtian Knowledge, *had procured an* Engliſh *Tranſlation, which was printed in the year* 1716, *there ſeemed to be a kind of neceſſity for publiſhing the work in* French; *which was done in the year* 1720.

Some time after, a reſolution was taken in Holland, *to print the* Bible, *with the Arguments and Reflections added to each chapter, that when the ſacred writings were read, the Arguments and Reflections might more conveniently be read with them. This deſign was communicated to the Reverend Mr.* Oſtervald, *Miniſter of the church of* Neufchatel, *and author of theſe Arguments and Reflections, who was deſired to put in their natural order the chapters in* Kings *and* Chronicles, *where the ſame circumſtances are related, and which, in the Edition publiſhed at* Neufchatel, *had been blended together, as the connection of the*

hiſtory

hiſtory ſeemed to require; that by this means each chapter might have its proper Arguments and Reflections. This the author conſented to, and put that part of his work into a new form; which produced afterwards the beautiful edition of the Bible *which was printed at* Amſterdam *in* 1724.

The copies of that Bible growing ſcarce, it has ſince been thought expedient to reprint it at Neufchatel. *The intention was no ſooner communicated to the Reverend Mr.* Oſtervald, *but he ſet himſelf to reviſe the whole work, made ſeveral improvements, and corrected the errors which had crept into the edition printed in* Holland. *The verſion received in our churches he ſtill retained, making only ſuch corrections as ſeemed neceſſary, and altering thoſe expreſſions and phraſes, which, being grown out of uſe, might occaſion ſome obſcurity. He added likewiſe, in ſeveral places, Notes and Explanations on the text, together with new Arguments and Reflections on a great number of chapters which had none before, becauſe not read in the public ſervice: ſuch are the chapters which contain nothing but names and genealogies. However, there are ſtill ſome few chapters without Reflections, becauſe they are acknowledged by all to be attended with difficulties, which make it hard to ſay any thing clear and expreſs concerning them. Our author has herein followed the example of many eminent Divines, who have choſe to be ſilent, where the meaning of the text was not entirely clear and evident. In a work of this nature, which is intended for general uſe, nothing ſhould be advanced but what is certain and inconteſtible; and great care ſhould be taken not to enter*

into

into a diſcuſſion of ſuch points, as would tend rather to puzzle than inſtruct the reader.

If any ſhould be ſurpriſed to find ſome of the chapters divided into two Leſſons, they are deſired to conſider, that when the chapters were very long, and full of variety, this could not well be avoided, without danger of protracting the ſervice too much, and overburden peoples memories with the variety and length of the Reflections.

But as it would be uſeleſs to furniſh Chriſtians with aſſiſtances in reading the Holy Scriptures to advantage, if they neglect to read them, or if they do it without ſuitable diſpoſitions; it was judged neceſſary to give ſome inſtructions on this ſubject in a Preliminary Diſcourſe.

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THE PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE,

Giving ſome Directions concerning the Reading of the Holy Scriptures.

THAT great numbers neglect the reading of the Holy Scriptures, is as evident as it is deplorable. Chriſtians there are, innumerable, who are almoſt entirely ignorant of the Bible; becauſe thoſe that have the rule over them ſuffer it to be read only by particular perſons, and with the greateſt precaution, as if it were a dangerous thing to put the word of God indifferently into the hands of all men. But, not to concern ourſelves at preſent with theſe conſiderations, we ſhall only obſerve, that the greateſt part, even of thoſe who have the reading of the ſacred writings recommended to them, neglect to do it. Many, it is true, for want of learning, may not be in a capacity to read the Scriptures; which is a great misfortune, and a ſhame to Chriſtians, that the number of thoſe who cannot read ſhould be ſtill ſo great among them. It may be ſaid too, that a great many do not read the word of God becauſe they are unable, through their poverty, to purchaſe that Divine Book. Thoſe to whom God has given riches, ſhould ſupply this defect,

fect, by dedicating ſome portion to the pious uſe of providing Bibles for the poor. To this may be added, that a great number of domeſtick, and other ſervants, have not leiſure to diſcharge this neceſſary duty, becauſe their maſters allow them not time for it. But however this be, thoſe Chriſtians are utterly inexcuſable, who have it in their power to read the word of God, and will not do it.

God, in his infinite wiſdom, and unbounded goodneſs, has ſupplied men, by the revelation of his will, with the moſt perfect means of inſtruction. He inſpired the prophets and apoſtles, and was pleaſed their writings ſhould be preſerved, that in them truth might always remain pure, without being corrupted by the forgetfulneſs and inconſtancy, the careleſſneſs or malice of men. The Scriptures, therefore, are the moſt valuable bleſſing God ever beſtowed upon us, except the ſending his Son into the world; they are a treaſure, which contain in them every thing that can make us truly rich, and truly happy. We muſt, therefore, have very little regard for God and his gifts, if we neglect to make a right uſe of this; and it would argue the greateſt degree of preſumption, to imagine we can do without that aſſiſtance, which God himſelf has judged ſo needful and expedient for us.

The uſe of the Holy Scriptures was very common among the primitive Chriſtians; and as they were regularly read in their religious aſſemblies, ſo did they read them with great diligence in their families. But the Scriptures were afterwards neglected, in proportion as ignorance and ſuperſtition gained ground.

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The people were no longer inſtructed in them; and though the cuſtom was retained of reading ſome portion of them in the church, they were rendered entirely uſeleſs, by being read in a language the people were unacquainted with. At length, the private uſe of God's word was wholly laid aſide; and this divine light in a manner extinguiſhed for ſeveral ages. About two hundred years ago, it was, as it were, taken from under the buſhel, where it had lain ſo long concealed; and the people in ſeveral parts of Chriſtendom, recovered their right of reading the Scriptures; but moſt of thoſe who enjoy this privilege do not improve it as they ought.

This indifference and neglect in reading the ſacred writings, is the true cauſe of that ignorance which prevails among the generality of Chriſtians. This is the reaſon they have but a ſlight and ſuperficial knowledge of the doctrines and duties of Chriſtianity, and too many entertain notions that are entirely falſe and groundleſs. This is the ſource of the many errors which are in vogue among us, and of the many impious and libertine notions which prevail more and more; for as ſoon as we forſake the Scriptures, which are our only rule of faith, to follow our own reaſonings, we muſt of neceſſity go aſtray. It is forſaking this divine light, which has occaſioned many perſons, who have thought themſelves inſpired, and imagined they have attained to the higheſt degree of piety and perfection, to fall into the moſt extravagant notions, and ſometimes into the greateſt impurities. In ſhort, to the ſame cauſe may be aſcribed all that remiſſneſs, that carnal and worldly-mindedneſs, which is too common among Chriſtians. All this, I ſay,

proceeds

proceeds from not reading the Holy Scriptures, and not making that uſe of them for which they were given.

It is true, this neglect in Chriſtians may be in ſome meaſure ſupplied by reading the word of God in our religious aſſemblies. And, indeed, if it is ſurpriſing the people ſhould neglect to read it, there is ſtill more reaſon to be aſtoniſhed, that for ſo many years, men ſhould have forgot to give the reading of the ſacred writings that honourable place in the public worſhip, which it always enjoyed among the *Jews* and among the firſt Chriſtians. But even ſuppoſing the Scriptures were regularly read in the church, this alone would not be ſufficient, unleſs Chriſtians read them likewiſe in their own houſes. The expreſs declarations of God's word, the practice of the church, both under the Old and New Teſtament, and many other reaſons, which it is not expedient to mention at preſent, prove the neceſſity of doing this. Beſides, private reading is attended with ſome advantages which public reading is not. In private, one may read with more leiſure, conſider things more cloſely, repeat the things more than once, and make a more nice application. Private reading is, likewiſe, the beſt way to improve by what we hear in public; it being impoſſible rightly to comprehend what is ſaid in public diſcourſes and ſermons, without being well verſed in the Scriptures. Add to this, that private reading keeps up a ſpirit of piety and devotion, whereas thoſe who neglect this, inevitably fall into an indifference and diſreliſh for divine things; which muſt be attended with remiſſneſs in the duties of Religion, and in a ſlaviſh ſubjection to the paſſions.

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We proceed now to conſider the manner in which the Holy Scriptures ought to be read: Here we ſhall make ſome reflections; firſt, on the Books of the Holy Scriptures, and their ſeveral parts; and, ſecondly, on the diſpoſitions which ought to accompany the reading of them.

I. Every one knows, that the Scriptures comprehend the Old and New Teſtaments: And as the Old Teſtament, which was written before the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*, is a part of the Bible which is leaſt read, and very many never read it at all, it ſeems neceſſary here to prove the uſefulneſs of thoſe Books in particular. It is a very great miſtake to imagine they were deſigned only for the *Jews*, and that they are of no uſe to Chriſtians. St. *Paul* ſays, that *whatſoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning*; and, ſpeaking of what had happened to the *Iſraelites*, he ſays, that *all thoſe things happened to them for enſamples, and were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.* *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf exhorts his diſciples to *ſearch the Scriptures, for in them*, ſays he, *ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which teſtify of me.* Our Lord, when he thus ſpeaks, recommends the reading and meditating on the writings of *Moſes* and the prophets, as he does in ſeveral other places. On the knowledge of what is contained in thoſe writings, depends the right underſtanding of the principal articles of the Chriſtian Religion. Of this we have a very remarkable and convincing proof, in the frequent quotations made by *Chriſt* and his apoſtles

apoſtles out of the hiſtories, prophecies, and other paſſages of the Old Teſtament. There are even whole Books in the New Teſtament, which no one can rightly underſtand, who has not read the Old with ſome care and attention; this remark is particularly true of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, which is nothing but a compariſon between the Law and the Goſpel.

But to convince us more fully of the uſefulneſs of the Books of the Old Teſtament, let us examine a little into their contents; they are of three kinds, being either hiſtorical, doctrinal, and moral, or prophetical.

The hiſtorical Books, which are the firſt in order, begin at *Geneſis*, and end at the Book of *Eſther*. They are called hiſtorical, becauſe they contain nothing but hiſtories, except ſome part of the Books of *Moſes*, where the laws which God gave to the *Jews* are ſet down. In theſe Books, we are informed of the moſt conſiderable events relating to religion, and the people of God, from the creation of the world, to the return from the *Babyloniſh* captivity. Theſe are the Books we ſhould begin with; for it is remarkable, that the firſt inſtruction God was pleaſed to give his church, was by hiſtory; this method of inſtruction being the moſt plain and eaſy, and ſuited to every capacity. Hiſtories are ſo eaſy to comprehend and retain, that even children may underſtand them without much difficulty; and, therefore, the foundation of their inſtruction ſhould be laid here. Beſides, on hiſtorical facts the whole of religion is founded; as hiſtory furniſhes us with invincible proofs of the truth and divine authority of the Scriptures.

tures. However, the hiſtories of the Old Teſtament contain not only facts, but likewiſe the doctrines and duties of religion: They ſet before us many noble examples, wherein are diſplayed the wiſdom, goodneſs, and juſtice of God's providence, his love to good men, and diſpleaſure againſt ſinners. The eleventh chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, is a remarkable proof of the truth of this obſervation. In that chapter, St. *Paul*, deſigning to ſhew the nature and effects of faith, collects together in one view the examples of faith, obedience, and conſtancy, which we meet with in the lives of the patriarchs, and other illuſtrious perſons, who lived before the coming of *Chriſt*; which may convince us, that the reading and meditating on the hiſtories of the Old Teſtament, muſt be of great uſe to Chriſtians.

The Books of the Old Teſtament, which are called doctrinal and moral, are the Book of *Job*, the *Pſalms*, and the writings of *Solomon*.

Theſe Books are not altogether ſo clear as thoſe which are hiſtorical. In *Job* and the *Proverbs*, for inſtance, we meet with ſome paſſages whoſe ſenſe is not eaſily determined; which is generally owing to ſome defect in the verſion; the extreme conciſeneſs of the ſentences, and the figures of ſpeech, ſo different from any in uſe among us, making it very hard to expreſs them in the modern languages. But if theſe Books are attended with a little obſcurity in ſome places, they may, nevertheleſs, be read with great advantage.

They ſupply us, in general, with theſe three things; with doctrines, with precepts of morality, and with

ſentiments of piety and devotion. Firſt, We learn from them the principal doctrines of Religion, ſuch as theſe; That there is a God who made the world; that he governs all things by his providence, diſpenſing good and evil, protecting good men, and puniſhing the wicked; that this God, who is perfectly juſt and righteous, will reward every man according to his works; with other doctrines of the like nature, which are clearly diſplayed in theſe Books, and confirmed with ſeveral very uſeful and inſtructive examples, particularly in the Book of *Job*, and the *Pſalms*. Secondly, Theſe Books contain moſt excellent rules of morality, and precepts of great uſe relating to the principal duties of religion; to juſtice, charity, purity, temperance, patience, and other virtues. Thirdly, In this part of the Old Teſtament, and particularly in the *Pſalms*, we meet with exalted ſentiments of piety, and the moſt excellent patterns of devotion; here we are taught how we ought to be affected with the majeſty of God, and reverence and adore the Supreme Being; with what pleaſure and delight we ought to meditate upon the wonderful works of creation and providence; with what gratitude and fervency of devotion, we ought to extol his perfections, and praiſe him for all his mercies; that we ought to pay the higheſt regard to God's holy commandments, and account thoſe advantages ineſtimable, which piety procures to its true votaries. Here we learn to truſt in God, to call upon him in time of trouble, to ſubmit with reſignation to the divine will, and to have recourſe to God's mercy by repentance, when we have offended him. Therefore,

fore, the reading of theſe Books muſt needs be of great uſe to guide and inflame our devotion.

The prophetical Books are the writings of the prophets, from *Iſaiah* to *Malachi*. They are ſtiled prophetical, becauſe they principally contain propheeies, or predictions. They are not, however, ſo ſtrictly prophetical, but we find in them ſeveral remarkable hiſtories, as in *Jeremiah*, *Daniel*, and *Jonah*; as well as many uſeful, moral inſtructions, in the exhortations and remonſtrances of the prophets. The prophecies, which make up the moſt conſiderable part of theſe Books, are of three kinds; ſome relate to *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the Chriſtian church; others concern the *Jews* more particularly; and others foretel what was to befal the ſeveral nations and empires of the world.

If, in reading the predictions of the prophets, we meet at firſt with ſome obſcurity, inſtead of being ſurpriſed at it, let us conſider, that every prophecy muſt be obſcure, at leaſt, in ſome reſpects, before the event. It was ſo far from being neceſſary to the ſalvation of the faithful in thoſe times, that theſe predictions ſhould be abſolutely clear to them, and that they ſhould perfectly comprehend them in every part, that, on the contrary, the meaning of them muſt needs be concealed. The unſearchable wiſdom of God, and the wonders of his providence, appear with much greater luſtre, when we reflect, that his deſigns were accompliſhed, and the predictions of the prophets fulfilled, without men knowing any thing of it, and by ſuch means as no one would ever have thought of. Beſides, had theſe predic-

tions been abſolutely clear in every circumſtance, men might have ſo far obſtructed the deſigns of Providence, that continual miracles, and altering the courſe of nature, might have been neceſſary in order to bring about the execution of them. Therefore God, in great wiſdom, ſpread a vail over the prophecies, that they might be attended with ſome obſcurity.

It is, however, to be obſerved, that what was once obſcure, the event has made clear. Moſt of the prophecies relating to the coming of *Chriſt*, to his ſufferings, and kingdom, to the rejection of the *Jews*, and the calling of the *Gentiles*, are now very eaſy to comprehend. The predictions concerning the *Jews*, which foretold the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and their diſperſion, occaſioned firſt by the *Aſſyrians* and *Babylonians*, and afterwards by the *Romans*, ſoon after the coming of our Lord; theſe predictions are ſo perfectly explained by the event, that there is no difficulty attending them. As to thoſe prophecies which related to other nations and kingdoms of the world, as the prophecies of *Iſaiah*, from the thirteenth chapter, and the remarkable predictions of *Daniel*, if the generality of readers find them difficult, becauſe they are ignorant of the hiſtory of thoſe times and nations, they are quite clear to thoſe who are acquainted with that hiſtory. Beſides this obſcurity, ariſing from the ſubject of the prophecies, the ſtile of theſe inſpired writers, who make uſe of various images, and figures of ſpeech, foreign to the uſages of theſe times, is another cauſe of obſcurity. But with ſome aſſiſtance, like that which is attempted in this work, and a little acquaintance

quaintance with the language of the prophets, we may eaſily diſcover their meaning. Upon the whole, if there are ſome paſſages in their writings which we do not perfectly comprehend, we may, without prejudice to our ſalvation, be ignorant of their true import.

It is a very great fault to neglect, as too many do, the reading of the propheeies. If Chriſtians would but read them, and meditate on them, they would find an aſtoniſhing light dart from them; they would diſcover beauties which they are now ſtrangers to; and would have a more lively ſenſe of the truth and excellence of religion than they now have. In fact, nothing can be conceived a more convincing proof of the being of God, nothing a more undeniable argument that he governs all things, and that the Scriptures are his word, than to ſee the exact completion of thoſe ancient propheeies, which were in the hands of the *Jews*, ſuch as we now have them, many ages before the coming of our Lord. For this reaſon, St. *Peter* adviſes Chriſtians to read and meditate on the propheeies, as a moſt likely means to ſtrengthen them in the faith. *We have alſo*, ſays he, *a more ſure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that ſhineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-ſtar ariſe in your hearts.*

The New Teſtament is that part of the Scriptures which it moſt concerns us to be acquainted with. If the Old and New Teſtament be compared together, the latter is certainly the cleareſt and moſt perfect: For though the doctrine of the Goſpel be at the bottom the ſame with that of *Moſes* and the prophets,

yet it is certain, that the divine truths, the duties, the promiſes and threatnings of the Goſpel, are propoſed with greater ſtrength and evidence than thoſe of the Old Teſtament. The Goſpel has not only removed the ſhadows of the law, and ſet in a clear light what was before revealed only in part; but, likewiſe, teaches us many things, which the faithful of old knew not, and which the prophets themſelves, as our Saviour obſerves, were ignorant of. Hence it is that St. *Paul* calls thoſe things *myſteries*, or *ſecret things*, which were unknown to former ages. Nor is it to be wondered at, that we find greater light in the Goſpel than in the Law: *Moſes* and the prophets ſpeak in the Old Teſtament; but in the New it is *Jeſus Chriſt*, the Son of God, of whom it is ſaid, *This is my beloved Son, hear him.* St. *Paul* makes this diſtinction, when he ſays, *God, who at ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpake in times paſt unto the fathers by the prophets, has, in theſe laſt days, ſpoken unto us by his Son.*

The New Teſtament conſiſts of the *Goſpels*, the *Acts of the Apoſtles*, and the *Epiſtles*. Of theſe, the Goſpels are the firſt in order and dignity; which offer to our view, Firſt, The diſcourſes of our Lord, as they proceeded from his ſacred lips; the moſt holy and moſt perfect laws, which he taught mankind, that thereby they might learn to know God, and to ſerve him in ſpirit and in truth; the duties which he recommends to the practice of his diſciples; the rewards and puniſhments of another life; and all theſe attended with ſuch a degree of evidence and conviction, as is to be met with no where elſe. Secondly,

condly, We read in the Goſpels an account of our Saviour's miracles, which diſplay his divine power, and at the ſame time his great goodneſs, ſince all his miracles were acts of mercy and kindneſs. When we read the Goſpels, we ought to give great attention to our Lord's miracles, as this method God was pleaſed to make choice of, to prove that *Jeſus* was the Meſſiah. Laſtly, In them we ſee deſcribed the unſpotted life of our great Redeemer, his zeal, his obedience to the will of his Father, his amazing love to mankind, his meekneſs, humility, ſincerity, purity, patience, and renouncing of the world. Theſe virtues, which ſhine forth in his life, are all united in his death, and appear with the greateſt luſtre. To the hiſtory of the death of *Jeſus Chriſt*, the Goſpel adds likewiſe an account of his reſurrection and aſcenſion, which are the foundation of our *faith* and *hope*.

From hence it is evident, that the Goſpels are the moſt conſiderable part of the New Teſtament; for which reaſon, the reading of them has always been looked upon in the church as a thing of the greateſt importance; and as the *Jews*, though they read the writings of the prophets, and received them as divine, had a particular veneration for the law of *Moſes*, and gave that the firſt rank; ſo Chriſtians have always expreſſed an extraordinary reſpect for the Goſpels. From hence proceeded the ancient cuſtom of riſing up, and ſtanding all the time the Goſpels were reading in the church, and the cuſtom of reading and explaining ſome part of them every Sunday in the year.

The *Acts of the Apoſtles* inform us, in what manner the Goſpel, after our Lord's aſcenſion, was preached, both at *Jeruſalem*, and the places adjacent, and in ſeveral parts of the world. The reading this Book is of great uſe, and as it is wholly hiſtorical, it cannot be very difficult to underſtand.

The *Epiſtles*, or Letters, which the apoſtles ſent, either to the churches in their time, or to particular perſons, make likewiſe a part of the Canonical Books of the New Teſtament. St. *Peter* informs us, that St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles were reckoned among the divine writings, in the life-time of the apoſtles. It would be a groſs miſtake to imagine that the Goſpels alone are ſufficient, and that the Epiſtles may be diſpenſed with. The Epiſtles furniſh us with an explanation of ſeveral articles, which are not altogether ſo evident from the Goſpels; ſo that the Goſpels are more clear, in many reſpects, when the Epiſtles are added to them. In truth, *Chriſt* did not always think fit to explain himſelf fully and completely upon every ſubject; his thoughts were often concealed under figurative expreſſions, or ſimilitudes, which were ſomewhat obſcure, and were not to be entirely cleared up till after his aſcenſion: There are even many things which *Chriſt* did not tell his apoſtles while he was with them, and which, conſequently, are not to be found in the Goſpels. Hear our Lord's own words: *I have yet many things to ſay unto you, but you cannot bear them now; howbeit, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, and will ſhew you things to come.* The apoſtles,

apoſtles, after they had received the Holy Ghoſt, were much more enlightened than before; and therefore we meet, in their writings, with the diſcovery of many things of the greateſt importance, and even ſuch as are abſolutely neceſſary for our inſtruction.

For the right underſtanding of the Epiſtles, the chief thing to be obſerved is, the occaſion and deſign of writing them. Though they treat of different ſubjects, as the exigencies of the church required at that time, yet what the apoſtles deliver upon thoſe ſubjects, ſerves to clear up ſeveral points in religion. Their aim, in general, was to preſerve in the Chriſtian churches, then lately founded by them, ſound doctrine, and purity of manners, and to guard the faithful againſt the errors which many perſons, converted to Chriſtianity from among the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, took great pains to diſſeminate, and thereby corrupted the doctrines and practices of Chriſtianity. The grand deſign of the apoſtles in all their Epiſtles, is to perſuade Chriſtians to perſevere in the faith, and in a holy life; and therefore they all end with earneſt exhortations to the practice of the virtues and duties of religion: There are even ſome which were written with no other view, particularly the Epiſtles called Catholick, which, except a few places, wherein the apoſtles ſlightly touch upon ſome article of faith, conſiſt wholly of moral precepts, and exhortations to true holineſs.

II. From what has been ſaid, it appears, that the reading of the Old and New Teſtament is a moſt excellent means of inſtruction and edification. But before we

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can reap this advantage from it, the heart and mind muſt be fitly diſpoſed for the reading of them. The Scriptures may be read, and with great diligence, and yet no advantage enſue, if we read them in a ſlight, curſory way, and only for the ſake of reading. It is with reading, as it is with prayer, and other acts of religion; they are of no uſe, and even become ſinful, when not attended with the neceſſary diſpoſitions.

1. The firſt neceſſary diſpoſition is *Attention*; that is, when a man reads, his mind ſhould be free, compoſed, and diſengaged from other thoughts. Above all, we muſt take heed that our hearts be not diſordered by our paſſions; for the heart and the paſſions are the great cauſes of diſtraction and inattention in reading, as well as in prayer; the mind naturally dwelling upon thoſe things which have taken poſſeſſion of the heart. For this reaſon it is convenient to make choice of thoſe ſeaſons for reading, in which we are diſengaged from other things, and particularly the morning. It is likewiſe of great uſe, before we begin to read, to ſtir up our attention, by ſeriouſly conſidering what we are going about, and reflecting, that when we read the Scriptures God ſpeaks to us, and by his word deſires to make us happy, and bring us to everlaſting life. To ſecure attention, we muſt likewiſe read with deliberation. Many are very fond of reading a great deal, and running over the Scriptures in a ſhort time; forgetting that what makes reading profitable is attention, meditation, and ſerious reflection on what we read. Reading, which is the nouriſhment of the

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ſoul, is like food to the body, which cannot ſupport life and vigour, unleſs it be chewed and digeſted. Let us therefore avoid precipitation, do nothing in a hurry, and allow ourſelves leiſure to weigh and conſider well what we read: To this end, we muſt avoid reading too long at a time; for ſhort readings are generally beſt; however, the following diſtinction may be obſerved. When we read the Hiſtorical Books, we may read more at a time, and faſter; becauſe hiſtory is more connected, its tranſitions from one ſubject to another are not ſo quick, and its connection engages and keeps up the attention, and makes it eaſier to retain what has been read. But when chapters are read which contain doctrines or precepts, as in the Book of *Job*, in the Proverbs, and Epiſtles, one cannot read ſo long together; becauſe each verſe demands a particular conſideration, and therefore, we muſt read the leſs, and with the greater deliberation.

2. We muſt read *frequently* and *diligently*. No one can be ſufficiently acquainted with the Scriptures, without making them familiar by frequent reading. Regular and frequent reading gives us an opportunity of meditating on them the more; whereas thoſe who read but ſeldom, will never furniſh their minds, much leſs fill their hearts, with what is contained in thoſe Sacred Books. Beſides, a careful and conſtant reading will give us a greater reliſh for God's word; which, the more we read and meditate on, the more beauties we diſcover in it; the more it enlightens the underſtanding, and ſanctifies and rejoices the heart. A Chriſtian, therefore, ſhould make this divine word

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his regular ſtudy; ſhould meditate therein day and night; and as he every day takes food for the nouriſhment of his body, ſo ſhould he every day give his ſoul that heavenly food which will nouriſh him to eternal life.

3. We muſt read with *judgment* and *diſcretion*, if we would rightly underſtand the ſenſe of Scripture, and diſcern the uſe we are to make of it. If this diſpoſition be wanting, we may read without advantage, and even by reading run into dangerous errors.

This *judgment* and diſcretion is neceſſary, Firſt, In order to diſtinguiſh how far what we read is the word of God. For as there are many actions related in Scripture, not for our imitation, but rather to inſpire us with horror and deteſtation againſt them, ſo there are many things which were not committed to writing to be the rule either of our thoughts or actions. The ſacred writers ſometimes ſet down the ſpeeches and ſentiments of the wicked: For inſtance, in the prophet *Malachi* we read theſe words, *It is in vain to ſerve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?* And in one of St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, we meet with this maxim of carnal and profane men, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die:* But when we read theſe, and ſuch like paſſages, we muſt remember, that thoſe who ſpeak thus are wicked men. And even thoſe who are in Scripture commended for their piety, did not always act in ſtrict conformity to it: Thus, when *David* vowed utterly to deſtroy *Nabal*'s houſe, we muſt conclude he ſinned in ſo doing; and the diſcourſes of *Job*'s friends, though they are extremely beautiful and inſtructive, are not

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to be approved of in every reſpect; for it is ſaid, *God was wrath with them, becauſe they had not ſpoken the thing that was right.*

This diſcernment is likewiſe neceſſary, in order to judge in what ſenſe we are to interpret what we read; otherwiſe we may often be greatly miſtaken. For example, when *Moſes* ſays, *The Lord hardened Pharaoh's* heart, one might imagine the hardneſs of mens hearts proceeds from God, and that he is the author of it; which would be a notion ſhocking and blaſphemous to the higheſt degree. When St. *Paul* ſays, That *Jeſus Chriſt has delivered us from the law*; that *he has blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances that was againſt us*; and that *we are juſtified without the deeds of the law*; we muſt conſider in what ſenſe he ſays it; or elſe we may run into a moſt pernicious error, and imagine Chriſtians are diſpenſed with keeping the moral law, and that good works are not neceſſary. Every day we hear ſinners and libertines pervert texts of Scripture, to excuſe themſelves and extenuate their crimes. *Unlearned and unſtable men*, as St. *Peter* obſerved in his time, *wreſt* that Divine Book *to their own deſtruction.* Examples of this kind are innumerable; which prove that it is of the greateſt importance to read the Scriptures with prudence and diſcretion.

One of the beſt ways to prevent miſtaking the true ſenſe of Scripture, is to have a conſtant eye to the deſign which the ſacred writers had in view; to examine upon what occaſion, and to what end they ſpeak; to obſerve the connection of what is ſaid with what precedes and what follows; and to compare what we read with other paſſages which may

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ſerve to explain it. If any one ſhould take all the verſes of the ſcriptures apart, as ſo many unconnected ſentences, with each its proper ſenſe and meaning, much like the ſentences in the Book of Proverbs, he would run into very great errors. We muſt never loſe ſight of the end and deſign of what is ſaid, if we deſire to diſcover the true meaning of God's word. This we muſt be particularly careful to do in the books and chapters which are doctrinal, and eſpecially in the Epiſtles; which is the reaſon we have been obliged to add a little to the length of the Arguments of thoſe chapters.

If a right judgment be neceſſary, as we have obſerved, in order to underſtand the Scriptures, it is not leſs uſeful in order to diſcover the improvement we are to make of them. To this end it muſt be conſidered, that the great deſign of the Scriptures, and the uſe they ſhould be applied to, is to produce in us true faith and the love of God, and thereby bring us to eternal life. *Theſe things are written*, ſays St. *John*, *that ye might believe that Jeſus is the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life thro' his name.* St. *Paul* ſays likewiſe, that *whatſoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.* This is the natural and genuine effect of every part of revelation: Its doctrines are revealed, that we may receive them with faith; that they may purify our hearts, and lead us to love and fear God; its commandments were given, that we might keep them; its promiſes and threatnings tend wholly to diſſuade us from that which is evil, and incline us to that which is good;

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and the examples which the Scriptures ſet before us, have the ſame tendency.

Therefore, whenever we read the Scriptures, we muſt endeavour to diſcover, firſt, what is of uſe to inſtruct and inform us; and then, what tends to ſanctify us, and bring us to God; that what we read may always excite us more and more to piety, and diſpoſe us to live a godly life. Moreover, it is of great importance for every one to take notice of what particularly concerns himſelf, and what bears the greateſt affinity to his own circumſtances and neceſſities. In this impartial application to ourſelves of what we meet with in God's word, conſiſts the right uſe of this Book. This St. *James* teaches us, when he ſays, *If any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glaſs; for he beholdeth himſelf and goeth his way, and ſtraightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.* Whereas the wiſe and faithful hearers of the word, are thoſe who ſeriouſly and attentively conſider and meditate upon it, and obey its commands. By which the Apoſtle ſhews, that the uſe we muſt make of the Holy Scriptures, is to learn obedience; that we muſt read and hear them with a deſign to grow better; and that he who does not make this uſe of them *deceiveth his own ſoul.*

4. The Scriptures muſt be read with *ſubmiſſion* and *obedience of faith.* Since it is God who ſpeaks in them, we have nothing to do but to be well aſſured that we rightly underſtand their meaning, which is never difficult in things neceſſary to ſalvation; and then we are with ſubmiſſion and docility

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to receive whatever they reveal, and make that the rule of our faith and practice. Therefore, when we read the hiſtories recorded in the Scriptures, we muſt believe them as firmly as if we were eye-witneſſes of every event; which we have the more reaſon to do, as there is no hiſtory which is attended with ſo many convincing proofs of its truth and certainty.

When the Scriptures propoſe doctrines as the objects of our faith, we muſt embrace them without the leaſt doubt or heſitation. If the doctrines revealed are of ſuch a nature, that it is impoſſible fully to comprehend the reaſon, or the manner of their exiſtence, this ſhould not in the leaſt ſtagger our faith. We muſt conſider, that the moſt evident and inconteſtible truths, if we attempt to fathom them, are attended with difficulties which no one can reſolve. Therefore, it muſt be prudent as well as pious, upon ſuch occaſions, not to give way to a ſpirit of curioſity; to lay aſide vain reaſonings and raſh inquiries, which would only ſerve to tempt us to doubting and infidelity. God has ſpoken, and let that ſuffice.

When we read the commands and precepts which God has given us in his word to be the rule of our actions, it is our duty to believe, that obedience and conformity to them is abſolutely and indiſpenſibly neceſſary. And as the ſenſe of the Scriptures is never obſcure in this reſpect, and it is impoſſible we ſhould be deceived, unleſs we wilfully ſhut our eyes againſt the truth; all we have to do is, with humility and an honeſt heart to ſubmit to whatever God is pleaſed to command; continually remembering, that as he has an abſolute right and authority to command our obedience, ſo are we ſure he will

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require nothing of us, but what tends to make us happy. Should the divine commands appear ever ſo diſagreeable, and thwart our moſt favourite paſſions and inclinations, it ſuffices that God has ſaid, *This do*, to make it our duty to obey; or, *This ye ſhall not do*, to oblige us to abſtain. We muſt ſilence our paſſions, and not liſten to the ſuggeſtions of our own hearts; for our paſſions are the enemies which raiſe all the difficulties we meet with in the way of God's commands, and ſuggeſt falſe reaſons to excuſe our diſobedience. And if to this end it be neceſſary to reſiſt our inclinations, and do violence to ourſelves, let us remember, this is the beſt proof we can give, that faith and the love of God is the ruling principle of our actions. Reſiſting our inclinations, and overcoming our natural reluctance, is the only teſt of our obedience, and a proof that our will is in entire ſubmiſſion .o the divine will. But it is a dangerous thing, and repugnant to the nature of faith, to argue when God commands, and to diſpute, either about the nature or neceſſity of our duty. To baniſh all falſe reaſonings and all vain pretences, whereby men endeavour to elude the expreſs declarations of God's word, is the reaſon why the apoſtles, when ſpeaking of the laws by which we ſhall be judged, ſo frequently adviſe us, *Not to be deceived, nor ſuffer ourſelves to be ſeduced by philoſophy and vain deceit*, and the like.

Laſtly, This ſubmiſſion muſt take place, likewiſe, in the promiſes and threatnings contained in the Scriptures; that is, when they deſcribe the happineſs of the life to come, or the puniſhments reſerved for the wicked, we ought no more to doubt of the cer-

tainty of thoſe promiſes or threatnings, than if we now actually ſaw the completion of them, and the great day of retribution was already come. This is one of the principal effects of faith. *Faith*, ſays St. *Paul*, *is the ſubſtance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not ſeen.* Now, ſince ſuch is the nature of that ſubmiſſion of faith, which ought to accompany the reading of the Scriptures; if we have it not, we ſhall read them and hear them in vain. *The word doth not profit, unleſs it be attended with faith in them that hear it.*

The laſt diſpoſition with which the Scriptures ought to be read, is *piety and devotion.* This diſpoſition is the principal, and includes all the reſt. He that reads the Scriptures, muſt have a love for truth and virtue; ſhould have a heart inclined to good, and ſincerely deſirous to know the will of God and to do it. This upright intention is what our Lord calls in the Goſpel, *An honeſt and good heart*, which makes a man, *when he has heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.* This makes the mind attentive, inſpires it with that prudence and judgment, which is ſo neceſſary to the right underſtanding of what God would have us know and do to be ſaved. Thoſe who have this pious intention, this honeſt heart, fail not to enter into the true ſenſe of the Scriptures, and to diſcover their beauties. This *Jeſus Chriſt* teaches us, in theſe remarkable words, *If any man will do the will of God, he ſhall know of my doctrine.* God manifeſts himſelf to thoſe that ſeek him; and ſheds abroad in their

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hearts the all-quickning light of his holy ſpirit, and furniſhes them with the moſt uſeful knowledge.

To conclude the whole. As the reading of the Scriptures requires a *pious* heart, ſo does it likewiſe demand a heart truly *devout*. Devotion, which, by the confeſſion of all who make any pretences to religion, is a neceſſary qualification in prayer, is not leſs requiſite in reading. When God ſpeaks to us in his word, we ought not to be leſs affected with thoſe ſentiments of reverence, zeal, joy, and love, which devotion inſpires, than we ought to be when we ſpeak to him in our prayers: Nay, prayer itſelf ſhould always accompany our reading. There is no better way to prepare to *hear the voice of God*, than to call upon him, and *lift up our hearts unto him.* It is by humbly imploring the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, that we obtain that grace, which prepares the heart, and diſpoſes it to love God and keep his commandments. By this alone, the reading of the Holy Scriptures will become profitable to our ſalvation, and bring us to that happy end, for which God was pleaſed to commit them to writing. God grant, that the reflections now made, and thoſe which are diſperſed through the body of this work, may produce this effect on thoſe that read them.

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THE FIRST BOOK of MOSES, CALLED GENESIS.

ARGUMENT.

The Book of Geneſis *was ſo called, becauſe in this book* Moſes *gives an account of the origin of all things. It begins with the creation of the world, and ends at the death of* Joſeph; *comprehending the ſpace of about* 2400 *years.*

CHAP. I.

THE firſt chapter contains an account of the creation of the world.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE firſt chapter of *Geneſis* teaches us the firſt truth in religion, namely, That there is a God, who created the world, and all things that are therein; that it is he who has given to all creatures the nature and qualities that belong to them; and that by his will the world ſubſiſts in that admirable order which we obſerve in it. But that we

chiefly learn from this chapter is, that God made man after his own image; that he gave him dominion over all other creatures, and endowed him with a ſpiritual and immortal ſoul, capable of knowing and loving his creator: and, therefore, it is our duty to acknowledge and adore the power, majeſty, and wiſdom of God, which are ſo manifeſt in all his works; to celebrate his goodneſs towards us, and continually render him the thanks, love, and obedience which are ſo juſtly due to him.

CHAP. II.

I. AFTER God had created the world in ſix days, he ſanctifies the ſeventh day. II. He places *Adam* in the terreſtrial paradiſe, and commands him not to eat of the fruit of a tree, which is called the tree of knowledge of good and evil. III. We have an account of the creation of the woman, and the inſtitution of marriage.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to obſerve three things in this chapter: 1. That God, having created the world in ſix days, reſted on the ſeventh, and hallowed that day; that the obſervation of the ſabbath-day might ſerve afterwards, to keep up among men the remembrance of the creation of the world. II. It muſt be obſerved, that God placed *Adam* in paradiſe, that he might be happy; but, to make trial of his obedience, at the ſame time gave him a law, attended with ſevere threatnings; forbidding him, upon pain of death, to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In this proceeding of the Almighty, we ſee the great goodneſs of God towards man in his ſtate of innocence; but this ſhews likewiſe, that man could not be independent; that he was obliged to ſub-

ſubmit to the laws of his creator; and that by his obedience alone, he was entitled to the effects of divine love. III. What Moſes relates of the inſtitution of marriage, obliges us to acknowledge the great wiſdom and goodneſs of God, appearing in this law, which he made at the beginning, for the good of mankind: It obliges us alſo to honour marriage as a holy ſtate, which has God for its author; and to avoid every thing that is contrary to ſo holy an inſtitution; and particularly impurity, and all manner of uncleanneſs.

CHAP. III.

AFTER *Moſes* had given the hiſtory of the creation of the world, he gives an account in this chapter, I. How *Adam* and *Eve* fell into ſin. And II. How God puniſhed them, by driving them out of paradiſe, and ſubjecting them to the miſeries of this life, and to death.

REFLECTIONS.

THE deſign of this chapter is to inform us, how ſin and death came into the world. This account of *Adam*'s ſin was committed to writing, that it might appear, that God is not the author of ſin; but that man fell into it wilfully, and through his own fault. We learn likewiſe, from the fall of our firſt parents, how dangerous it is not to believe what God has declared, to give ear to temptations, and to follow the deſires of the fleſh; and with how much care we ought to watch over ourſelves; and be obedient in all things to the laws of the Lord, even in thoſe things that appear to be of the leaſt importance. We may alſo learn from what happened to *Adam* and *Eve* after their ſin, and the puniſhment that God inflicted on them, in making them ſubject

to the miſeries of this life, and to death itſelf, and driving them out of the garden of *Eden*, that the divine threatnings are never in vain, and that God cannot ſuffer man's diſobedience to go unpuniſhed. But the goodneſs of God, at the ſame time, appeared in the promiſe, that *the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head*; the meaning of which was, that God would deliver men from ſin and death, which were entered into the world by the ſeducement of the devil. Let us bleſs God for fulfilling this promiſe, by ſending *Jeſus Chriſt* into the world, to deſtroy the works of the devil, and to procure us an admiſſion into the heavenly paradiſe, where he has prepared for us happineſs that ſhall never end.

CHAP. IV.

I. MOSES recites the birth of *Cain* and *Abel*, *Cain*'s killing his brother, and his puniſhment. II. After this, he gives a liſt of the poſterity of *Cain*, and mentions the birth of *Seth*, another ſon of *Adam*, from whom the patriarchs deſcended.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter propoſes to us two remarkable examples: the firſt is that of *Abel*; who, as St. *Paul* ſays, *through faith offered a more excellent ſacrifice than Cain*, and obtained witneſs that he was righteous; but, notwithſtanding his righteouſneſs, was expoſed to the envy and cruelty of his brother, who killed him. Thus God was pleaſed to ſhew, from the beginning of the world, that he accepts the ſervice of none but good people, whom, nevertheleſs, he ſuffers ſometimes to be oppreſſed by the wicked; a proof, from the very firſt, that piety is not to expect its reward in this life. The other example is that of *Cain*, in whom we have an image

of

of wicked men, and particularly of ſuch as hate their brethren, and an inſtance of the ill effects of envy and jealouſy. We may alſo obſerve, in the remorſe and terrors that haunted *Cain* after he had committed this horrid deed, that a guilty conſcience is generally tormented with horror and remorſe. The genealogy of *Cain*'s deſcendants was preſerved, to ſhew the diſtinction there was afterwards, between the impious poſterity of *Cain*, and that of *Seth*, the ſon of *Adam*, from whom the patriarchs and the Meſſiah deſcended.

CHAP. V.

THIS chapter contains the names of the patriarchs, and their genealogy from *Adam* to *Noah*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two principal obſervations to be made upon this chapter: The firſt is, upon the long lives of the patriarchs. God was pleaſed to give them ſuch long lives, that by this means the world might be ſooner peopled, and the knowledge of the deity, and the remembrance of the creation, more eaſily and more ſurely preſerved. The ſecond reflection, is that which St. *Paul* makes in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, where he ſays, that *Enoch was tranſlated, and ſaw not death, becauſe he was acceptable to God whilſt he lived.* God thought fit thus to recompence the righteouſneſs of this patriarch, and to convince the men of that time, that there is another life after this, reſerved for good men. This is a truth which is ſtill more clearly proved in the goſpel, and particularly, by the aſcenſion of *Jeſus Chriſt*. Thoſe, therefore, who ſhall imitate righteous *Enoch, and walk with God* as he did, and ſtudy to pleaſe him by

a holy and religious life, ſhall be admitted, after death, into that place to which he was tranſlated, and whither our Lord is gone to prepare a place for us.

CHAP. VI.

GOD, ſeeing the extreme corruption of mankind, reſolves to ſend a deluge upon the earth; and commands *Noah* to build an ark for himſelf and his family, and all other creatures that God was pleaſed to preſerve.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to obſerve in this chapter, in the firſt place, that the marriages of the poſterity of *Seth* with the daughters of *Cain*, occaſioned that impurity and injuſtice, and all thoſe other ſins which were multiplied upon the earth, even among the deſcendants of *Seth*; which obliged God to bring the flood upon it. From whence we learn, that intercourſe with the wicked and ungodly is a very dangerous thing; and, in particular, that uncleanneſs and ſenſuality have always been the occaſion of great evils; and, that this ſin, as well as violence and injuſtice, expoſes men to the wrath of God. II. The goodneſs and patience of God towards the inhabitants of the firſt world is very viſible, in his giving them an hundred and twenty years to repent in, and warning them by the preaching of *Noah*, and by the building of the ark, that the flood was coming upon the earth. Thus has God, in all ages, exerciſed great patience and long-ſuffering towards men, giving them neceſſary warning of their danger, and time to prevent his judgments. III. In the command God gave to *Noah* to build an ark, we ſhould conſider the care he takes of thoſe that fear him, and the wonder-

ful

ful means he was pleaſed to uſe, in his great wiſdom, for the preſervation of man and beaſt, that the earth might be repleniſhed after the flood. IV. and laſtly, We obſerve in this chapter, the faith and obedience of *Noah, who being warned by God of things not ſeen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteouſneſs which is by faith.* This reflection, which St. *Paul* makes in the eleventh chapter of the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, engages us to imitate the faith of this patriarch, to walk in righteouſneſs as he did, and to make a right uſe of the patience of God, who invites us to repentance; that we may avoid thoſe judgments which will ſurely fall upon the wicked, and be ſaved with thoſe whom he will receive into his heavenly kingdom.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of the flood, from which *Noah* was preſerved in the ark, with his family, and thoſe creatures which were with him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory of the flood is very remarkable; it being the moſt ſignal example God has given of his juſtice ſince the creation of the world. It is too a moſt certain fact, the remembrance of which has been preſerved among all nations, and in the moſt ancient authors, as well as in the holy ſcriptures. St. *Peter* teaches us the uſe we ought to make of this hiſtory, when he ſays, *If God ſpared not the old world, but ſaved Noah, the eighth perſon, a preacher of righteouſneſs, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reſerve the unjuſt unto the day of judgment to be pnuiſhed.* Let us ſeriouſly

reflect upon this great example; let us learn from hence that God is juſt; that his threatnings are not in vain; and that the great number of ſinners cannot ſecure them from his vengeance. Moreover, let us conſider, that as they who were not in the ark periſhed, ſo thoſe who ſhall neglect to enter into the way of ſalvation, and to lay hold of the long-ſuffering of God, ſhall alſo inevitably periſh. This is what *Jeſus Chriſt* warns us of in the goſpel, when he ſays, that it will be at the day of his coming *as in the days of Noah*; when the inhabitants of the firſt world lived in ſecurity, and thought nothing of the flood, till it came upon them, and deſtroyed *them all*. Thus will ſinners be ſurprized at the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt* to judge the world, and to render to all men according to their works.

CHAP. VIII.

MOSES relates in this chapter, *Noah*'s going out of the ark, after the waters of the deluge were dried up, and his offering a ſacrifice to the Lord; in conſequence of which, God reſtored the order of nature.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are principally to obſerve here is, that God, after he had given the moſt dreadful proofs of his ſeverity in the deluge, gave marks of his goodneſs, not only towards *Noah* and his family, but towards the whole race of mankind, by reſtoring the world to that ſtate and order which we now ſee it in. And ſince we enjoy the effects of God's goodneſs, we ought to render him our thanks for it, and ſtir up ourſelves to love and fear him, from the conſideration of his mercy, as well as of his juſtice,

juſtice, which both remarkably appear in the ſeveral circumſtances of the univerſal deluge.

CHAP. IX.

HERE we obſerve three things: I. The laws which God gave *Noah*, and all mankind, after the flood, eſpecially thoſe relating to food, which was then altered, and to murder. II. God's promiſe never to drown the world again. III. What happened to *Noah*, when being overtaken with wine, his ſon *Ham* derided him. IV. *Moſes*, at the end of the chapter, mentions the death of *Noah*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That we ought inviolably to obſerve thoſe laws which God gave *Noah* after the deluge; that we ought to uſe ſoberly thoſe creatures which he allows us to partake of, and to avoid all cruelty and injuſtice. II. That the covenant God made with *Noah* and all mankind, promiſing never more to bring a general deluge upon the earth, but to preſerve the world in the condition it was then in, has ſubſiſted ever ſince; and, conſequently, all of us are bound to acknowledge and celebrate the great goodneſs of the Lord towards us, of which we continually feel the effects. III. That if the world is no more to be deſtroyed by water, it will be by fire, at the laſt day, according to St. *Peter*. *If the old world, being overflowed by water, periſhed, the heaven and the earth are reſerved for fire at the day of judgment.* IV. As to what is ſaid, at the end of this chapter, of *Noah*'s being overtaken with wine, it muſt be conſidered, that this happened to him innocently, becauſe he was unacquainted with the effect of wine, the uſe of it having been till then unknown; and therefore this example, ſo far from excuſing

excuſing intemperance, is a proof that we ought carefully to avoid it. What is related of the ſons of *Noah*, teaches us, that God bleſſes thoſe children who honour their parents, and curſes thoſe who are wanting in that reſpect which is due to them.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter names the deſcendants of *Shem*, *Ham*, and *Japhet*, the three ſons of *Noah*, by whom the earth was peopled again after the flood.

REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH this chapter contains nothing but the names of men and people, it is, nevertheleſs, very remarkable; as we ſee here the origin of all the nations of the world, and the firſt beginning of monarchy. What *Moſes* here ſets down, ſerves to confirm the genealogy of the patriarchs, from whom our Lord is deſcended; ſo that this chapter furniſhes us with a good and convincing proof of the truth of the ſacred hiſtory, and of the divine authority of theſe books; what *Moſes* here ſays being perfectly agreeable to the moſt antient and moſt authentic hiſtories of the ſeveral people of the world, and the countries which they have inhabited.

CHAP. XI.

I. MOSES informs us, in this chapter, that men attempting to build the city and tower of *Babel*, God confounded their language; which occaſioned their being diſperſed throughout the whole earth. II. He gives an account of the deſcendants of *Shem*, the ſon of *Noah*, down to *Abraham*.

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REFLECTIONS.

THE relation *Moſes* gives of the diſperſion, that happened when the deſcendants of *Noah* undertook to build the tower of *Babel*, ſerves to inſtruct us in the ſequel of the ſacred hiſtory, and how the ſeveral countries of the world came to be inhabited. II. God thought fit thus to diſperſe thoſe who pretended to ſecure themſelves from any future deluge, by building this tower, that he might puniſh their pride and impiety; and, likewiſe, that the earth might be more ſpeedily inhabited. As to the genealogy of the poſterity of *Shem*, we muſt obſerve two things: one is, that though the lives of men were then much ſhorter than before the flood, they were, nevertheleſs, much longer than they are at preſent: the other is, that this genealogy was preſerved, to ſhew *Abraham*'s deſcent from *Shem*, the ſon of *Noah*.

CHAP. XII.

THIS chapter begins the hiſtory of *Abraham*; in which we are informed, I. That the patriarch left his own country, at God's command, to come into the land of *Canaan*, which the Lord promiſed to give him. II. That he was forced, by a famine, to go down into *Egypt*, where *Pharaoh*, the king, took away his wife from him, and afterwards reſtored her again.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to conſider, in this chapter, I. That God called *Abraham*, and made a covenant with him, in order to preſerve the true religion among his poſterity, from which the Meſſiah was one day to deſcend. II. That *Abraham* obeyed the calling of God,

God, believing in his promiſes, though they were not immediately accompliſhed; that he was expoſed to ſeveral troubles; that he dwelt in the land of *Canaan* as a ſtranger, and was forced by famine to go into *Egypt*, where he had like to have loſt his wife. St. *Paul* teaches us the uſe we are to make of this account of the calling of *Abraham*, in the eleventh chapter to the *Hebrews*: *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he ſhould after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he ſojourned in the land of promiſe, as in a ſtrange country.* Let us learn, by this example of *Abraham*, to follow our call, and to obey God in all his commands, how difficult ſoever they may appear to us; to live like ſtrangers in this world, and not to ſeek our true country here, but in heaven; waiting, like our father *Abraham*, for that city which is to come, whoſe builder and maker is God. The plagues with which God ſmote the king of *Egypt*, becauſe he had taken away *Sarah* with an intention to marry her, ſhew, that adultery is a ſin very odious in the ſight of God. And we ſee, in the manner of *Pharaoh*'s reproving *Abraham*, that that prince was not ignorant how great this ſin was. It is, however, to be remarked, that the king of *Egypt* conferred many favours on *Abraham*, and that this patriarch carried away great riches out of that country: thus did he begin to experience the effects of the divine bleſſing and protection.

CHAP. XIII.

I. *Abraham* and *Lot* being returned from *Egypt* into the land of *Canaan*, ſeparated from each other, not being able to live together, by reaſon of their great poſſeſſions. II. *Lot* ſettled at *Sodom*, and

Abraham

Abraham dwelt in the land of *Canaan*, which God again promiſed to give him for an inheritance.

REFLECTIONS.

THE great riches which God gave to *Abraham*, ſhould be conſidered as an effect of the bleſſing which he had promiſed him; by which we may learn, that the promiſes of God are always fulfilled, and that he does ſometimes beſtow upon them that fear him, even the bleſſings of this preſent life. The diſpute that happened between the ſervants of *Lot*, and the ſervants of *Abraham*, and the Moderation of the latter, who gave his nephew *Lot* the choice of fixing where he pleaſed, is a leſſon to us, to avoid thoſe quarrels that are uſually occaſioned by worldly goods; to make the firſt advances towards an accommodation, and to renounce even our own advantage for the ſake of peace. The choice that *Lot* made of the country of *Sodom*, which was very fruitful, and very pleaſant, but its inhabitants, even then, very corrupt, and threatned with the judgments of God, teaches us, not always to look at the advantages and conveniences of life; that it is a dangerous thing to live where eaſe and plenty reign, and that we ought to ſhun the company of bad men. Laſtly, We may ſee, in the repetition of the promiſes that God made to *Abraham*, God's unalterable love to his children, and the goodneſs wherewith he ſupports their faith, in thoſe trials which he expoſes them to.

CHAP. XIV.

I. THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of the war between the king of *Sodom*, and his neighbours, and the king of *Elam*, and his confederates; in which war, the king of *Sodom* was overthrown, and *Lot* taken, with all his ſubſtance; but *Abraham* defeated

defeated the king of *Elam*, and delivered *Lot*. II. As he was returning from the victory, *Melchiſedek* met him, and brought him bread and wine; and *Abraham* gave him the tenth part of all the ſpoil which he had taken.

REFLECTIONS.

THE defeat of the king of *Sodom*, is to be looked upon as a puniſhment which God inflicted upon the inhabitants of that city, for their great wickedneſs, and as a preſage of their total deſtruction. What befel *Lot*, who was taken priſoner in that war, ſhews, that they who dwell among the wicked, are often involved in the divine Judgments which fall upon them; and that, therfore, it is dangerous to have any intercourſe with them. *Abraham*'s victory is a mark of God's bleſſing upon that patriarch, and of his protection of *Lot*. It ſhews alſo, that it is lawful to make war in a juſt cauſe, and in one's own defence. Laſtly, What is here ſaid of *Melchiſedek*, who was king of *Salem*, and a prieſt of the moſt high God, proves, that the true God was known and worſhipped in that country; and ought to put us in mind of what St. *Paul* ſaith in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, that this *Melchiſedek*, who bleſſed *Abraham*, and to whom that patriarch gave the tenth of all, repreſented *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, the king and high-prieſt of the church; who was to reign over all things, and exerciſe a more excellent and perfect prieſthood than that of the *Jewiſh* high-prieſt, or of *Melchiſedek* himſelf.

CHAP. XV.

GOD renews the promiſe that he had made to *Abraham*, of giving him a ſon, and a numerous

rous poſterity, which ſhould poſſeſs the land of *Canaan*; and confirms that promiſe to him by a ſign.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we obſerve three things: I. That God renewed the promiſes he had made to *Abraham*, and confirmed them by a miraculous ſign. II. That *Abraham*'s believing God, was imputed to him for righteouſneſs. III. That God declared to him, that thoſe promiſes ſhould not be accompliſhed in his life, and even that his poſterity ſhould be afflicted for a time; which ſuggeſts to us theſe reflections: 1. That God in his goodneſs has, in all ages, thought fit to confirm the faith of thoſe he loves by external ſigns; which he ſtill does in the ſacraments, which we ought to eſteem at the higheſt rate. 2. That all thoſe who believe in him, and obey him, as *Abraham* did, ſhall be juſtified. 3. That the children of God do often meet with afflictions in this world; and will not, till after this life, ſee the full completion of thoſe promiſes that God has made them.

CHAP. XVI.

IN this chapter we have, I. An account of the birth of *Iſhmael*, the ſon of *Hagar*. II. *Hagar*'s leaving her maſter's houſe, and flying from *Sarah*: and the angel's prediction, that *Iſhmael* ſhould be a powerful prince, and have a numerous poſterity.

REFLECTIONS.

THE marriage of *Abraham* with *Hagar*, muſt be looked upon as one of thoſe things which God tolerated at that time, becauſe of the condition men were then in; but which were contrary to the firſt inſtitution of marriage, and therefore are abſolutely forbidden by the laws of the goſpel: and the

diviſions which happened upon that occaſion in *Abraham*'s family, ſhew, that ſuch marriages are commonly attended with fatal conſequences. However, it is to be obſerved, that God took care of *Hagar's* child, promiſing to bleſs it, becauſe it was the ſon of *Abraham*; which alſo came to paſs, the poſterity of *Iſhmael* being very numerous, and very powerful afterwards, and ſubſiſting for many ages, as we learn from hiſtory.

CHAP. XVII.

I. GOD renews his covenant with *Abraham*, and the promiſes he had made him; and to aſſure him of the certainty of his promiſes, he changes his name. II. He gives him the law of circumciſion, and foretels the birth of *Iſaac*. III. *Abraham*, in obedience to the command of God, was circumciſed, and all his family.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are chiefly to learn from this chapter, containing the inſtitution of circumciſion, is what St. *Paul* obſerves in the fourth chapter of the epiſtle to the *Romans*, namely, that *Abraham* was juſtified by faith before he received the ſign of circumciſion; from whence he concludes, that neither circumciſion, nor any other external rite, can make a man acceptable to God; and, that nothing but a ſincere faith, attended with obedience, can produce this effect. Nevertheleſs, this ſame hiſtory ſhews, that the external ſigns of the divine covenant are not to be neglected or deſpiſed; and particularly, the ceremonies and ſacraments which God has appointed as means to ſtrengthen our faith, and confirm his promiſes; but, on the contrary, that we ought to reſpect and obſerve them religiouſly, and

to

to make ſuch a uſe of them as may ſerve to confirm us in the faith and love of God, and excite us more and more to holineſs of life.

CHAP. XVIII.

I. THREE angels appear to *Abraham*, promiſing the birth of *Iſaac*, and acquainting him, that God was going to deſtroy *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. II. *Abraham* intercedes with the Lord for the inhabitants of *Sodom*, but in vain; God aſſuring him, that the wickedneſs of that people was at the height, and their deſtruction determined and unavoidable.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are four things chiefly to be obſerved in this chapter, I. The firſt is, the reflection which St. *Paul* makes in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, upon *Abraham*'s receiving the three angels who appeared to him: *Be not forgetful*, ſays he, *to entertain ſtrangers, for thereby ſome have entertained angels unawares.* II. The ſecond reflection is, that *Abraham* had been many years without the ſon which God had promiſed him; but that the angels declared at laſt to him, that *Iſaac* ſhould be born that year. Thus the promiſes of God always prove true, though the performance of them be ſometimes delayed. III. It is to be obſerved in the third place, that God, when he was going to deſtroy *Sodom*, thought fit to reveal his deſign to *Abraham*, that the patriarch might be convinced this overthrow proceeded from God, and might thereby be engaged to continue always in the fear of God, to truſt in his promiſes, and to promote piety and religion in his family. By this we ſee that God reveals himſelf to thoſe who ſerve him faithfully; that the conſideration of the divine judgments is a motive to fear him;

that it is the duty of parents to take care that their children walk in the ways of the Lord, and that God bleſſes the poſterity of the upright. IV. The fourth reflection concerns the interceſſion of *Abraham* in behalf of the people of *Sodom*, and God's refuſing to pardon them, becauſe there were not ten righteous men to be found in the whole city. Let us learn from hence to pray one for another, and to endeavour in particular to turn away the wrath of God from thoſe who are threatned with it; that God has a great regard to the prayers, and to the holineſs of good men; that he ſometimes ſpares towns and people for their ſake; but that when their number is very ſmall, and wickedneſs and impiety prevail, the prayers of the righteous are unprofitable, and nothing can then ſkreen a people from the divine vengeance.

CHAP. XIX.

I. THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of the deſtruction of *Sodom*, and the places about it, which were conſumed by fire from heaven. II. *Lot* was preſerved from that deſtruction, and retreated to *Zoar*, with his two daughters.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us learn from the memorable hiſtory of the deſtruction of *Sodom* and the neighbouring cities, I. That what occaſioned the inhabitants of theſe cities to fall into thoſe abominable crimes was, as one of the prophets ſays concerning them, *Pride fulneſs of bread, and abundance of idleneſs*, as well as hardneſs of heart to the poor and needy. Let us obſerve by this example, how dangerous it is to live too much in eaſe and pleaſures, and in particular, to what exceſs ſenſuality and impurity may lead men. II.

The

The dreadful judgment of God upon *Sodom*, is a proof of the judgment and condemnation reſerved for the ungodly, and in particular, for thoſe who give themſelves up to vile affections. This is what St. *Peter* teaches us, when he ſays, that *God turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into aſhes, and condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto thoſe that after ſhould live ungodly; reſerving the unjuſt unto the day of judgment to be puniſhed; and chiefly them that walk after the fleſh in the luſt of uncleanneſs.* III. The ſame apoſtle remarks on this hiſtory, that God delivered juſt *Lot* from the overthrow of *Sodom:* that this righteous man dwelling among them, in ſeeing and hearing vexed his righteous ſoul from day to day with their unlawful deeds; and that therefore the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations and afflictions. IV. We find in this hiſtory, that *Lot*'s ſons in law periſhed in the deſtruction of *Sodom*, becauſe they deſpiſed the warning which *Lot* gave them; and that his wife was turned into a pillar of ſalt, for looking back and having her heart and affections engaged on that city from whence ſhe came out. Theſe two examples teach us not to neglect the warning God gives us, to dread his threatnings, and to obey his call, without regarding the things of the world, leſt we be condemned with the world: this is what *Jeſus Chriſt* exhorts us to when he ſays in the goſpel, *Remember Lot's wife.* Laſtly, That which happened to *Lot* himſelf, and his two daughters, after he had eſcaped from the overthrow of *Sodom*, ſhould engage us to be at all times upon our guard, and avoid all temptations to ſin, eſpecially thoſe of drunkenneſs and intemperance, which are generally attended with fatal conſequences.

CHAP. XX.

Abraham goes to *Gerar*, and dwells there. The king of that place, *Abimelech*, takes his wife from him; but at the command of God reſtores her to him.

Reflections.

I. WHAT happened to *Abraham* when *Abimelech* took his wife from him, and the puniſhment that God inflicted on that prince for it, ſhews, that *Abraham* was expoſed to a great many troubles, but that God was ever with him and protected him. II. It appears ſecondly, from this hiſtory, that the true God was known in that country where *Abraham* then was, and that they had ſome fear and reverence for the deity; as God's appearing to *Abimelech*, and that king's anſwer, clearly evince. III. The obedience of *Abimelech* in reſtoring *Sarah*, as ſoon as God had made known to him, that ſhe was *Abraham*'s wife, and his abhorrence of the ſin of adultery, ſhew that he was afraid to offend God; ſo that that prince will riſe up in judgment againſt many Chriſtian princes, who, being ſo clearly inſtructed in the will of God, have no regard to it, but abandon themſelves to ſin, and particularly to all manner of impurity. Laſtly, God's healing of *Abimelech*, after he had reſtored *Sarah*, and *Abraham* had prayed for him, is a proof that God pardons ſins of ignorance; that he withholds his chaſtiſement as ſoon as we forbear ſinning; and that he has likewiſe great regard to the prayers and interceſſion of good men.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

I. THIS chapter gives an account of the birth of *Iſaac*. II. The reaſon of *Iſhmael*'s being driven out of *Abraham*'s houſe, with *Hagar* his mother; and the manner of God's preſerving *Iſhmael*'s life. III. The league between *Abraham* and king *Abimelech*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE firſt reflection on this chapter relates to the birth of *Iſaac*, who was born to *Abraham*, though the patriarch and *Sarah* his wife were very old. In this event were fulfilled God's promiſes of giving *Abraham* a ſon, who ſhould be his heir, and partake of the divine covenant. We obſerve, moreover, in this event the efficacy of faith; ſince, as St. *Paul* ſays in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, it was through faith in the promiſes of God, that *Abraham* and *Sarah* had this ſon according to the promiſe. II. Upon *Iſhmael*'s being caſt out of *Abraham*'s houſe, and excluded from being his heir, St. *Paul* makes this remark, that all thoſe who deſcended from *Abraham*, were not counted his children, nor partakers of the divine election; that God beſtows his favours upon whom he pleaſes, and in ſuch meaſure as he thinks fit; and that neither carnal birth, nor an outward profeſſion of religion, avail any thing without a true faith. It is, however, to be obſerved, that God bleſſed *Iſhmael*, becauſe he was deſcended from *Abraham*; though he was excluded from thoſe advantages which were promiſed to *Iſaac*. God diſtributes his favours in a different degree; but he does good to all, even to thoſe who are excluded from ſome particular privileges. III. And laſtly, The league which *Abra-*

ham made with *Abimelech* ſhews, that the children of God may make treaties and alliances for their ſecurity; and that ſuch treaties ought to be inviolably obſerved.

CHAP. XXII.

THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of *Abraham*'s ſacrifice, and the names of his brother *Nahor*'s children.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſhould conſider this beautiful hiſtory with great attention: I. Here we ſee, firſt, the truth of what St. *Paul* and St. *James* teach us, that *Abraham* ſhewed his faith by his works, when God tried him, and commanded him to offer up his only ſon; which is an evident proof that wherever true faith is, it leads men to do whatever God commands; and conſequently, that we cannot pleaſe God nor be juſtified without obedience, and without good works. II. This admirable example of the obedience of *Abraham*, who obeyed the divine command in ſo difficult a point, teaches us to love God above all things, to be ready to offer up to him all that is moſt dear to us, and to ſubmit ourſelves to his will, even in the moſt hard and ſevere trials, and always truſt in his providence. III. The repeated aſſurances God gave *Abraham* of his favour, deſerve particularly to be attended to, who ſaid unto him by his angel, after the patriarch had given proof of his obedience: *Now I know that thou feareſt God, ſeeing thou haſt not withheld thy ſon, thy only ſon from me; becauſe thou haſt done this, I will ſurely bleſs thee.* Though we owe our being and all that we have to God, and what we do deſerves no reward, yet he graciouſly accepts our endeavours to

pleaſe

pleaſe him, and to expreſs our love to him, and rewards them abundantly. IV. And laſtly, The proof *Abraham* gave of his love to God, in offering up *Iſaac*, ſhould lead us to conſider the infinite love that God has ſhewn to us, in delivering his only Son *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord to die for us, and ſhould engage us to love him, and moſt heartily thank him for his mercy towards us.

CHAP. XXIII.

SARAH being dead, *Abraham* buys a field of the children of *Heth* to bury her in.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory contained in this chapter teaches us, not to neglect the duties of interment, and not to grieve exceſſively for the dead. But the chief reflection is, that *Abraham*'s deſire to have his wife buried in the land of *Canaan*, and his purchaſing a burying-place there, is a mark of his faith and firm perſuaſion, that God would give that country to his poſterity. We ought to learn from hence, to truſt in the promiſes of God, and to expect from him the raiſing of our bodies, he having ſo expreſsly promiſed it in the goſpel, and we having ſo ſtrong a proof of it in the burial and reſurrection of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

CHAP. XXIV.

THIS is the hiſtory of *Iſaac*'s marriage with *Rebecca*, daughter of *Bethuel*, and granddaughter of *Nahor*, *Abraham*'s brother.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this hiſtory we are chiefly to obſerve the piety and faith of *Abraham*, who would not have his ſon marry

a *Canaanitiſh* and idolatrous woman, but would marry him in his own family; and likewiſe the piety of his ſervant, who prayed to God for ſucceſs in his journey; and when he had ſucceeded in his undertaking, did not forget to offer up moſt hearty thanks and praiſe to God. This ought to be an inſtruction and example to us, to have God in view in all our undertakings, and eſpecially in that of marriage; which ought to be performed according to the rules of religion and holineſs, that we may obtain his bleſſing upon it.

CHAP. XXV.

THIS chapter gives an account, I. Of *Abraham*'s marriage with *Keturah*, his ſecond wife. II. Of the death of *Abraham*. III. Of the deſcendants of *Iſhmael*, and his death. IV. of the birth of *Eſau* and *Jacob*, the ſons of *Iſaac*; and laſtly, Of *Eſau*'s ſelling his birth right to *Jacob* his brother.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Paul* obſerves on the death of *Abraham*, that he died, as the other patriarchs did, without ſeeing the accompliſhment of God's promiſes, he being a ſtranger and ſojourner on the earth. From whence we may infer, that God reſerved a heavenly country for them. The increaſe of *Iſhmael*'s poſterity, ſhews the truth of thoſe promiſes that God had made to *Abraham*. The choice which God made of *Jacob*, preferably to his elder brother *Eſau*, and his deſcendants, teaches us, as St. *Paul* alſo obſerves in the epiſtle to the *Romans*, that God is free in the diſtribution of his favours, and does beſtow them as he pleaſes; and that all thoſe who deſcended from the patriarchs were not for that reaſon eſteemed the true people of God. Laſtly, *Eſau*'s con-

contempt of his birthright, ſelling it to *Jacob*, from a ſpirit of ſenſuality and profaneneſs, ſhould teach us to eſteem the grace of God above all things, and not to prefer the profits and pleaſures of this world to ſpiritual and heavenly bleſſings. This is St. *Paul*'s advice, when he ſays, *Let no one be a fornicator, or profane perſon, as Eſau, who for a morſel of meat ſold his birthright.*

CHAP. XXVI.

I. *ISAAC* retires into the country of the *Philiſtines*, upon account of the famine, where God renews his promiſes to him, and gives him freſh proofs of his protection and favour. II. The ill treatment of the *Philiſtines* obliges him to leave that country, and come to *Berſheeba*, where he builds an altar to the Lord, and makes a covenant with *Abimelech*, the king of *Gerar*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the life of *Iſaac*, as well as in that of *Abraham*, we ſee a mixture of proſperity and adverſity. The great riches of *Iſaac*, and the covenant he made with *Abimelech*, are the effect of God's bleſſing upon that patriarch; but the dangers to which he was expoſed in the country of the *Philiſtines*, and the frequent quarrels raiſed againſt him, were the adverſities with which God tried him, and engaged him to leave that country. Thus all men, and eſpecially the children of God, have a ſhare ſometimes of proſperity, and ſometimes of adverſity; but what place, and what condition ſoever they that fear God are in, the divine favour and protection does always accompany them, and deliver them from all their troubles.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

MOSES relates how *Jacob* obtained, by ſurprize, the bleſſing, which *Iſaac* his father intended for *Eſau*. When *Eſau* knew it, he was ſo angry, that he reſolved to kill his brother *Jacob*; which obliged *Rebecca* to ſend *Jacob* into *Meſopotamia*.

REFLECTIONS.

UPON this hiſtory we muſt obſerve, that *Jacob* obtained the bleſſing of his father by treachery, and yet God permitted it ſo to happen, and was pleaſed that the bleſſing ſhould take place, becauſe *Eſau* was unworthy of it; and becauſe the promiſes made to *Abraham* and *Iſaac* were to be fulfilled in *Jacob*. Thus God often permits things that he does not approve, and makes uſe of the ſins of men to bring about the deſigns of his providence, without being the author of thoſe ſins. As for the concern that *Eſau* expreſſed, when he ſaw his father would not alter nor revoke the bleſſing he had given to *Jacob*, as it proceeded only from a carnal temper, and from jealouſy and rage againſt his brother, whom he was determined to kill, it cannot be looked upon as a mark of true repentance. St. *Paul*'s reflection upon this ſubject is: *Let no one be a profane perſon, as Eſau, who, when he would have inherited the bleſſing, was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he ſought it carefully with tears.* Let us be wiſe by this example, which repreſents that deſpair which will torment the wicked, when they ſhall find themſelves ſhut out of the kingdom of God. Laſtly, The retreat of *Jacob*, who went to *Meſopotamia*, to avoid his brother's anger, teaches us wiſely to ſhun dangers, and to give way for a time to the malice and injuſtice of thoſe who ſeek to hurt us. Beſides, this flight of *Jacob*, which

which was a ſevere trial to him and his father *Iſaac*, and ſeemed to be an obſtacle to his happineſs, was the means which providence made uſe of to make him richer, and happier, and more powerful than he would have been in his father's houſe; as by the ſequel of this hiſtory will appear. Thus God ſometimes turns into a bleſſing, that which is looked upon as a great misfortune; which ſhould be, to good men, a powerful motive to rely upon the divine providence.

CHAP. XXVIII.

I. *JACOB* goes into *Meſopotamia*, by his father *Iſaac*'s command, to marry into the family of *Laban*, his mother's brother. II. God, in the night, appears to him on the way, in the viſion of a ladder which reached from earth to heaven, and promiſes to bleſs him; for which *Jacob* expreſſed his gratitude, by worſhipping God in that place, and making a vow to give him the tenth of all that he ſhould poſſeſs.

REFLECTIONS.

THE command which *Iſaac* gave his ſon *Jacob*, to go into *Meſopotamia*, there to take a wife, and the prayers he offered up for ſucceſs in his journey, are proofs of the piety of that holy patriarch, and of his firm confidence in the promiſes of God. The effect of *Iſaac*'s prayers appeared in what happened to *Jacob* as ſoon as he was ſet out for *Meſopotamia*, and particularly in the viſion of the ladder, which he ſaw in a dream, to aſſure him that God would be with him wherever he went. This example ſhews, that the Lord is preſent with his children wherever they are, and that he employs his angels for their ſecurity and defence. Let us next acknowledge

ledge the piety of *Jacob*, who aſked of God only bread to eat, and clothes to cover him; and who vowed to conſecrate to God the place where he had ſeen the viſion, and the tenth of all his ſubſtance. Let us imitate ſo great an example; let us be contented if God gives us food and raiment; and let us make it an indiſpenſible duty to devote to him ſome part of our ſubſtance, to ſhew by this, as by every other means in our power, our piety and gratitude.

CHAP. XXIX.

JACOB comes to his uncle *Laban*, and marries his two daughters, *Leah* and *Rachel*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE chief thing to be obſerved in this chapter is, that God, according to his promiſes, accompanied *Jacob* in his journey, and brought him ſafely to the houſe of *Laban*, where he married, and by that means gave him ſeveral children, who were heads and fathers of the people of *Iſrael*. Nevertheleſs, it muſt be remembered, that the marriages of *Jacob*, who had ſeveral wives together, being contrary to the firſt inſtitution of marriage, God did not approve of them, though he tolerated them, for reaſons reſulting from the nature of the men of thoſe times, and from the deſigns of his providence; wherefore thoſe irregularities have ſince been aboliſhed by the law of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who has entirely reſtored the laws of marriage and of chaſtity, as we ſee in the goſpel.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXX.

I. MOSES mentions the birth of the children which *Jacob* had by his wives. II. After *Jacob* had lived ſeveral years with *Laban* his father-in-law, he would have returned into his own country; but *Laban* prevailed upon him to ſtay ſtill longer with him, for wages which he agreed to give him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. UPON this, as well as the foregoing chapter, it muſt be obſerved, that the great number of children born to *Jacob*, ſerved to make his poſterity exceeding numerous; though God did not approve all the marriages he had contracted, as was before obſerved. The jealouſy and diviſions between *Jacob*'s wives, as well as the great irregularities of moſt of his children, are a ſufficient proof that thoſe marriages were attended with very bad conſequences. II. Obſerve, ſecondly, that though *Laban* meant *Jacob* no good, but evil, and kept him only for his own intereſt; God bleſſed *Jacob* ſtill more than before, and increaſed his ſubſtance and his flocks exceedingly. The means which *Jacob* made uſe of to increaſe his cattle, would not have been lawful, had not God, to reward him for the unjuſt treatment he received from *Laban*, giving him authority ſo to do, as we learn in the following chapter. God, to bring about his purpoſes, ſometimes permits men to make uſe of means, which would not be innocent in other circumſtances; he brings good out of evil, and makes even ſin contribute to the execution of his deſigns: but this by no means gives us authority to do any thing that is bad. And Chriſtians eſpecially, who are much more enlightned than men were in the

times

times of the patriarchs, ought never to depart from the moſt exact rules of piety, purity, and juſtice.

CHAP. XXXI.

I. *JACOB* having lived twenty years with *Laban* his father-in-law, returns to *Canaan*, by God's command, with his family and all his ſubſtance, without acquainting *Laban* with it. II. *Laban* being informed of it, purſues him, but God ſuffered him not to do *Jacob* any hurt; ſo that he let him go in peace, and even made a covenant with him.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory preſents us with the following obſervations: I. That God bleſſed *Jacob* with great riches, in the houſe of *Laban*, as he had promiſed him. II. That God commanded *Jacob* to return into the land of *Canaan*, which he was to inherit, having beforehand prepared him to leave *Meſopotamia*, by the unjuſt and cruel treatment of *Laban*. III. That *Laban*, inraged at the departure of *Jacob*, purſued him at firſt with a full intent to do him ſome injury; but God forbidding him to hurt *Jacob*, they were reconciled, and made a covenant together. Thus God bleſſes thoſe he loves; thus he guides and preſerves them from the dangers that threaten them, and turns the hearts of their enemies in their favour. Let it be obſerved further, that *Rachel*, when ſhe left her father's houſe, took with her the idols which were in the houſe; for which *Laban* reproached *Jacob* very ſeverely. This ſhews, that though the true God was known in the family of *Laban*, idolatry began to get ground; and therefore it was neceſſary *Jacob* and his family ſhould leave that country, and return to the place where *Iſaac* his father lived, to worſhip God with purity.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXII.

I. *JACOB* being informed that his brother *Eſau* was coming to meet him with four hundred men, implores the divine aſſiſtance, and ſends preſents to *Eſau*, to pacify him. II. An angel wreſtles with *Jacob*, bleſſes him, gives him the name of *Iſrael*, and aſſures him that God will defend him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE example of *Jacob*, who, in the danger that threatned him, implored the divine aſſiſtance, and endeavoured to pacify his brother by his ſubmiſſion, teaches us to have recourſe to God in all our dangers; to join prudence to our prayers; and to uſe all our endeavours to pacify thoſe who are exaſperated againſt us, and to bring about a reconciliation. II. It appears that *Jacob* was very rich in cattle, ſince in the preſent he ſent his brother, there was a great number of camels and domeſtic animals. III. The piety, humility, and gratitude with which *Jacob* returned thanks to God for his protection and bleſſings beſtowed upon him, teach us to thank God, and humble ourſelves before him, acknowledging his favours towards us, and our own unworthineſs. IV. Upon the wreſtling of *Jacob* with the angel, we muſt obſerve, that God was pleaſed, by this means, to aſſure him that he had nothing to fear from his brother *Eſau*, and that he ſhould be ſtronger than all his enemies; for the ſame reaſon, the angel gave *Jacob* the name of *Iſrael*, which ſignifies, he that hath prevailed with God. However, it is to be obſerved, that in this rencounter *Jacob* became lame; to be a memento to him all his life, of what had happened on this occaſion; and to remind him, that he with whom he had ſtrove, was an angel

gel of God; and if he had been conqueror, it was becauſe God was pleaſed to grant him the victory. Laſtly, We muſt obſerve with the prophet *Hoſea*, that it was by prayers and tears, and by ſupplication for mercy, that the patriarch prevailed when he wreſtled with God. From whence we may learn the efficacy of prayer, when it is performed with faith, zeal, and perſeverance.

CHAP. XXXIII.

MOSES relates, I. What paſſed in the interview between *Jacob* and *Eſau*. II. *Jacob*'s arrival at *Shechem*, where he built an altar to the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have ſeen, in this chapter, how *Jacob* pacified his brother *Eſau* by his reſpect and ſubmiſſion, and how God protected and brought him ſafe into the land of *Canaan*. Here we may be convinced, that God hears and delivers thoſe that truſt in him; that he turns the hearts of their enemies; and that meekneſs and humility go a great way in appeaſing thoſe that are provoked. The care that *Jacob* took to build an altar in the place where he ſettled, was an effect of his piety, and teaches us diligently to diſcharge the duties of religion, and thereby to teſtify our gratitude to God for his favours to us.

CHAP. XXXIV.

SHECHEM takes away *Dinah*, the daughter of *Jacob*, and obtains her in marriage, on condition that all the inhabitants of his city ſhould be circumciſed; which, when done, two of *Jacob*'s ſons took that opportunity to ſlay the inhabitants of *Shechem*.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THESE are the inſtructions which this hiſtory affords us: I. That which happened to *Dinah*, when ſhe was going to viſit the *Shechemites*, teaches us to avoid all occaſions of falling into temptation, or leading others into it. II. The revenge of the ſons of *Jacob* for the violence committed upon their ſiſter, is to be accounted a treacherous, baſe, cruel, and even impious action; ſince they made uſe of the pretext of religion to murder the *Shechemites*; and it was accordingly cenſured by *Jacob*, who reproached his ſons with this crime upon his death-bed. III. It muſt be obſerved, that although this was an unjuſt action, yet God ſuffered it, in order to puniſh *Shechem* for the crime he had committed. IV. We ſee by this event what great evils are occaſioned by impurity, and that we ought not to follow the dictates of revenge. Laſtly, This accident is to be looked upon as a trial that God thought fit to bring upon *Jacob*, and as a means made uſe of by his providence, to hinder the patriarch from ſettling in that country at that time.

CHAP. XXXV.

I. *JACOB* puts away the idols from his family, and journies to *Bethel*, where he builds an altar to the Lord, and where God renews the promiſes he had made him. II. After that, he departs from *Bethel*; his wife *Rachel* dies in childbed of *Benjamin*; and he arrives with all his family in *Hebron*, at his father *Iſaac*'s, whoſe death is alſo here related.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter are to be obſerved, I. *Jacob*'s frequent changing of his dwelling, and the afflictions

with which God viſited him, particularly by the death of *Rachel*; whereby it appears, that the patriarch had no ſettled ſtate in the land of *Canaan*, nor any happineſs ſecured to them upon earth; and that their country was in heaven. II. We ſee alſo, that wherever *Jacob* went, God appeared to him, and repeated his promiſes, and the aſſurances of his protection; from whence we are to acknowledge, that God is every where with thoſe that fear him, and never withdraws his love from them. III. The care that *Jacob* took to baniſh idolatry out of his family, burying the idols which his people carried with them, and to fulfil the vow that he had made, to worſhip God at *Bethel*, where he had appeared to him as he went into *Meſopotamia*, is a noble example of piety and gratitude, which we ought to imitate. IV. The horrid crime which *Reuben* committed, mentioned in this chapter, was a great affliction to *Jacob* his father, who reproached him for it before his death, and puniſhed him, by taking from him his right of firſt-born. Laſtly, *Moſes* informs us, that *Iſaac* lived to an extreme old age, and that he had the comfort before his death of ſeeing again his ſon *Jacob* crowned with the bleſſings of heaven: which was a very ſenſible proof of God's love to *Iſaac*, and a reward of his piety beſtowed on him by God in this world.

CHAP. XXXVI.

THIS chapter contains a genealogy of the deſcendants of *Eſau*, *Jacob*'s brother.

REFLECTIONS.

IT appears from this chapter, that after *Jacob* and *Eſau* parted, *Eſau* acquired great riches, and had a numerous and powerful poſterity, which ſubſiſted a long

long time in a very flouriſhing condition, though he had no ſhare in the divine covenant, as *Jacob* had. Thus the promiſes of God made to him by his father *Iſaac* were fulfilled. God, who diſpenſes his bleſſings as he pleaſes, does not beſtow them on all men in an equal degree; but yet there is no one who is intirely deprived of them.

CHAP. XXXVII.

HERE begins the hiſtory of *Joſeph*, one of the ſons of *Jacob*. I. In this chapter we find *Joſeph* dreaming dreams, which denoted the glory to which he ſhould one day be exalted. II. We obſerve, that his brethren, moved with jealouſy and hatred againſt him, intended to have murdered him; but ſold him a ſlave into *Egypt*, and made their father *Jacob* believe that he had been devoured by wild beaſts.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory of *Joſeph* is one of the fineſt and moſt remarkable in the holy ſcriptures, which affords us the cleareſt evidence of the providence of God, conducting all things with amazing and ſtupendous wiſdom, and making *all things work together for good to thoſe that love him*. In this chapter we are to obſerve, I. That God was pleaſed to reveal, by the dreams of *Joſeph*, the glory to which he ſhould be raiſed, a long time before it happened. II. We ſee, in the malice of *Joſeph*'s brethren againſt him, that virtue and innocence are often expoſed to envy and jealouſy, and that theſe paſſions lead men to commit very great crimes. III. The behaviour of *Joſeph*'s brethen, not only towards him, but their father alſo, upon whom they brought ſo great ſorrow, proves that they were moſt of them extremely

wicked and unnatural; as appears from ſeveral other places of this book. IV. Let it however be remarked, that God ſaved the life of *Joſeph*, by *Reuben*'s means, and was pleaſed to ſend ſome merchants thither, who carried *Joſeph* into *Egypt*, where he was to be raiſed to great power. In this whole hiſtory, we are led to admire and adore the ways of providence, which, in a ſurpriſing manner, makes uſe of the wickedneſs of men to accompliſh its deſigns. This may ſerve for a leſſon of comfort to all thoſe good people that are expoſed to ſufferings by the malice and injuſtice of men.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

MOSES relates, in this chapter, *Judah*'s marriage, and his inceſt with *Thamar* his daughter-in-law.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we have more inſtances of their irregular conduct of *Jacob*'s ſons. The children of virtuous parents do not always inherit their piety; and among thoſe who know God, and live in covenant with him, there may be ſome very vicious, notwithſtanding the advantages they enjoy. This hiſtory teaches us likewiſe, that ſenſuality and uncleanneſs draw men into great and enormous crimes; and that God abhors all manner of impurity. We here alſo ſee, how apt wicked men and hypocrites are to condemn others with great ſeverity, while they themſelves are equally, if not more guilty. *Judah*, who ordered his daughter-in-law to be burnt, had defiled himſelf with an odious crime. However, the two children of *Thamar* are mentioned in the genealogy of our Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*, as may be ſeen in the firſt chapter of the goſpel of St. *Matthew*.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIX.

JOSEPH being in the ſervice of *Potiphar*, God bleſſed him in ſuch a manner, that his maſter made him ſteward over his houſe: but becauſe he would not conſent to the wicked deſires of *Potiphar*'s wife, ſhe accuſed him, and he was thrown into priſon, where God ſtill took care of him.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee that *Joſeph* was no ſooner arrived in *Egypt*, but by his wiſdom and fidelity he gained the favour and confidence of his maſter, and experienced that bleſſing from God, which every where attends the virtuous. But he was likewiſe there expoſed to a dangerous temptation, which, however, he reſiſted, through the fear he had of ſinning againſt God. This example of *Joſeph*'s piety and chaſtity, ought to have great influence upon Chriſtians to keep them from ſin, and eſpecially from uncleanneſs. We ſee, by what happened to *Joſeph*, when accuſed by his maſter's wife and thrown into priſon, that thoſe who have caſt off modeſty are eaſily hurried to revenge, lying, and all manner of wickedneſs; and that innocence is ſometimes ſlandered and oppreſſed. But the kind treatment *Joſeph* met with in priſon, ſhews, that God is always with the righteous, and that he never forſakes them, even when they are perſecuted unjuſtly.

CHAP. XL.

1. JOSEPH interprets the dreams of *Pharaoh*'s two officers that were in priſon with him: he foretels to one, that he ſhould be reſtored to his employment; and to the other, that he ſhould be put

to death; and prays the former, to get him out of priſon. II. What *Joſeph* foretold came to paſs; but that officer, who was releaſed out of priſon, forgot *Joſeph*, ſo that he remained in priſon two years longer.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter furniſhes us with this general reflection: That the dreams of *Pharaoh*'s two officers were ſent by God, to ſerve afterwards to make *Joſeph* known to *Pharaoh*, and to procure his releaſe from priſon; wherein we ſhould admire the providence of God, who ſo ordered it, that he might bring about the deliverance and exhortation of his ſervant. The behaviour of the butler, who forgot *Joſeph*, repreſents the uſual conduct of thoſe in proſperity; they forget thoſe in miſery, even though they owe them the greateſt obligations. However, it muſt be obſerved too, that God would not deliver *Joſeph* out of priſon by means of this officer, but was pleaſed to try him yet two years longer, to deliver him afterwards in a more wonderful manner, and raiſe him to a greater degree of power than he would have attained if he had been ſet at liberty before. This ſhews, that *God's ways are not as our ways*; that he does not always make uſe of thoſe methods for the deliverance of his children, which men judge moſt convenient; and if he be ſlow in coming to their aſſiſtance, it is becauſe he will deliver them after a more ſignal manner.

CHAP. XLI.

I. PHARAOH has two dreams, which *Joſeph* interprets; telling him there would be ſeven years of plenty, and afterwards ſeven years of famine. II. He adviſes him to lay up the corn in the years

years of plenty, that the people might be provided when the famine came. III. *Pharaoh* makes *Joseph* governor of *Egypt*. IV. *Joseph* marries, and has two sons, *Manasses* and *Ephraim*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things chiefly to be observed in *Pharaoh*'s dreams. I. The foreknowledge of God, and the care he took of the *Egyptians*, but especially of *Jacob*'s family, for whose subsistance he was pleased to provide by *Joseph*'s means. II. These dreams are to be looked upon as the means God made use of for *Joseph*'s deliverance, and to make him known to *Pharaoh* by the interpretation of his dreams, and by his wise counsels; which, after his sufferings, soon raised him to the government of *Egypt*. Thus he attained the glory which had been formerly promised him; thus did God reward him for his virtue and innocence, which had been so long oppressed; and shewed, that he had tried him with so many adversities, only to render his virtue more pure, and bring him to greater prosperity afterwards. The marriage of *Joseph*, and the birth of his two sons, was, as he owned himself, and expressed by the names he gave them, another blessing from God, who caused him to find in a strange land, that rest and ease which he could not meet with in his father's house.

CHAP. XLII.

I. THE sons of *Jacob* coming into *Egypt* to buy corn, present themselves before *Joseph*, who knows them; but does not discover himself to them. II. He orders them to be put in prison, and keeps *Simeon* there, to oblige them to bring *Benjamin* to him. However, he sends them back with corn, and

cauſes their money to be put into their ſacks; and when they come to their father, they give him an account of what had happened to them in their journey.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter preſents us with three obſervations: I. That when *Joſeph*'s brethren came into *Egypt*, and did obeiſance to him, his dreams were accompliſhed; and that the reaſon why God had ſent him thither, was for the ſupport of *Jacob*'s family, and to bring them into that country. II. *Joſeph*'s conduct towards his brethren, ſhews the affection he had for them, ſince he ſupplied them with as much corn as they wanted, and returned their money: we diſcover likewiſe in his behaviour a great deal of prudence, in concealing himſelf from them, and in detaining *Simeon*. This he did, not out of reſentment againſt his brethren, but to engage them to return again, and to bring *Benjamin* with them, by that means to bring his father down; and alſo becauſe he had reaſon to miſtruſt them, and feared, that if he had told them who he was, they would have hid it from their father. III. What *Joſeph*'s brethren ſaid one to another when they were put into priſon, is very remarkable. Till then, they had not had ſo lively a ſenſe of the heinouſneſs of the ſin they had committed againſt him twenty years before; but the diſtreſs they were in, made them remember the anguiſh they had ſeen him in, and their inhuman treatment of him. The conſcience of a ſinner may be inſenſible for a time; but ſooner or later it will awake, eſpecially in time of adverſity, and ſtrangely torment him with horror and remorſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLIII.

I. *JACOB* being forced by the famine to ſend his ſons again into *Egypt*, conſents that *Benjamin* ſhould go with them. II. When they come into *Egypt*, they preſent themſelves before *Joſeph*, who received them very kindly, and made them eat with him.

REFLECTIONS.

JACOB's being forced to ſend his ſons again into *Egypt*, muſt be conſidered as a new trial brought on him by God; in which appeared his tenderneſs for his children, and his faith and perſeverance; above all, he gave a noble example of piety and reſignation, recommending them to the divine protection, and ſubmitting to be deprived of them, if God ſhould think fit. Thus are we to ſubmit to the diſpenſations of providence, and reſign ourſelves to all events. What *Joſeph* ſaid to his brethren when they came again into *Egypt*, and his manner of treating them, ſhewed his extreme tenderneſs for his father, and his brother *Benjamin*, and that he always loved his brethren, notwithſtanding the injuries they had done him. This character of kindneſs and meekneſs is the ſure mark of good men: they not only have the moſt tender affection for their relations, but are without reſentment for the injuries they have received, and are always ready to do good to thoſe that have offended them.

CHAP. XLIV.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. The direction that *Joſeph* gave his ſteward upon the departure of his brethren, to put his cup into *Benja-*

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min's ſack, that he might have a pretence for ſtopping them. II. What *Judah* ſaid to move *Joſeph*'s compaſſion, and engage him to detain him inſtead of *Benjamin*.

REFLECTIONS.

ANother method which *Joſeph* wiſely put in practice to try his brethren ſtill further, before he made himſelf known to them, was ſtopping *Benjamin*, in order to diſcover their true ſentiments, and make them more fully ſenſible of the ſin they had committed againſt him. The tender and pathetic diſcourſe of *Judah* is likewiſe very remarkable. It was a lively repreſentation of the extreme anguiſh he and his brethren were in, and a ſincere acknowledgment that God had juſtly puniſhed them. Such is the effect of afflictions; which are very proper to awaken the conſcience, and make men humble; and therefore God, in his great wiſdom, makes uſe of them to bring men to the knowledge and ſenſe of their ſins.

CHAP. XLV.

I. *JOSEPH* makes himſelf known to his brethren, and orders them to fetch their father, and to bring him into *Egypt*. II. *Jacob* hearing that *Joſeph* was yet alive, prepares himſelf to go down to him.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT paſſed between *Joſeph* and his brethren when he made himſelf known to them, is a very extraordinary inſtance of meekneſs and tenderneſs. His diſcourſe and behaviour ſhew, that he had ſo far forgot what his brethren had done to him, that he not only forgave them, and forbore reproaches,

but

but even comforted them, and begged them not to grieve for what they had done. II. We may here obſerve the piety of *Joſeph*, who acknowledges, that all the evil his brethren had done to him, had been permitted and directed by God's providence, for the good of their families. We ſee, moreover, the care that *Joſeph* took of his father, in providing for his journey and reception in *Egypt*. Theſe are glorious examples of meekneſs, forgiveneſs, and piety, which every one ought to imitate. Laſtly, We obſerve that *Jacob*, after he had lamented his ſon *Joſeph* as dead, had the joy to hear that he was alive, and that he was ruler over the land of *Egypt*. Thus does God comfort his children, and give them a happy iſſue out of all their afflictions.

CHAP. XLVI.

MOSES relates in this chapter the journey of *Jacob*, with all his family, from the land of *Canaan* into *Egypt*.

REFLECTIONS.

OBſerve in this chapter, that before *Jacob* ſet out for *Egypt*, God appeared to him, ordered him to go down, and promiſed to bleſs him in that country, and to bring back his poſterity from thence. Since it pleaſed God the children of *Iſrael* ſhould ſojourn ſome time in *Egypt*, as he had before revealed to *Abraham*; this order was neceſſary, becauſe otherwiſe, *Jacob*'s going into *Egypt* might ſeem inconſiſtent with the promiſes of God to give him the land of *Canaan*. *Jacob* obeyed the divine command; which was a proof of his faith, as well as his ſubmiſſion to providence. The number of the children of *Jacob*'s family, which conſiſted then but of ſeventy perſons, ſhews how greatly his poſterity was multiplied

plied in *Egypt*. In the interview between *Jacob* and *Joseph*, we may obſerve the reſpect that *Joſeph* ſhewed his father, their mutual tenderneſs, and the joy and comfort which followed the afflictions to which they had been expoſed.

CHAP. XLVII.

I. *JOSEPH* preſents his brethren, and afterwards his father, to *Pharaoh*, who permits them to dwell in the land of *Goſhen*. II. The famine ſtill continuing, the *Egytians* ſell their cattle and their lands to *Pharaoh*. III. *Jacob* perceiving his end approaching, makes *Joſeph* promiſe to bury him in the land of *Canaan*.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE we are to conſider: I. *Pharaoh*'s kind reception of *Jacob* and his family, which is a mark of the bleſſing that attended *Jacob*, and ſhews how God diſpoſes and turns the hearts of kings in favour of thoſe he loves. II. The method that *Joſeph* obſerved in diſtributing the corn, during the famine, is a proof of his prudence, and likewiſe of his goodneſs and equity; ſince he left them the produce of their lands, reſerving only a fifth part for the king. However, this example does by no means countenance thoſe who govern to trample upon the people, nor do any thing, eſpecially in times of ſcarcity, which is contrary to the rules of juſtice and equity. III. *Jacob*'s deſire to be buried in the land of *Canaan*, is a remarkable proof of his faith in God, and that he died in full aſſurance that God would give that land to his poſterity. Thus the faithful live and die, in a ſure hope that God will not fail to accompliſh, even after their death, the promiſes he has made them.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLVIII.

I. *JACOB* being upon his death-bed, bleſſes *Ephraim* and *Manaſſes*, the two ſons of *Joſeph*, preferring *Ephraim* the younger to *Manaſſes* the elder. II. He foretels, that God would deliver the children of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, and cauſe them to return into the land of *Canaan*.

REFLECTIONS.

JACOB's laſt words to *Joſeph* are very edifying, and afford us a proof of his faith and fervent devotion, and his lively ſenſe of all the favours he had received from the Almighty, together with the greateſt tenderneſs for *Joſeph*. The deſire *Jacob* had to bleſs the children of *Joſeph*, and the excellent prayer with which he recommended them to God, ſhews, that he looked upon the bleſſing of heaven as the ſpring of all the happineſs of his children; which is a noble example to dying perſons, and eſpecially to fathers of families when near their end. The preference that *Jacob* gave, by divine inſpiration, to *Ephraim* the younger, before *Manaſſes* the elder, ſhews that God beſtows his favours according to his own good pleaſure, but always with wiſdom, juſtice, and mercy. This bleſſing of *Jacob* was fulfilled, when the tribe of *Ephraim* became afterwards ſo powerful, that it even gave name to one of the ten tribes of *Iſrael*.

CHAP. XLIX.

THIS chapter contains the laſt words of *Jacob*, in which he prophecies what ſhould happen to his twelve ſons, and their poſterity. After that he renews the command he had given to *Joſeph* to bury him in the land of *Canaan*, and then dies.

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REFLECTIONS.

THERE are four things to be remarked in the laſt words of *Jacob*. I. His prayers in behalf of his children, and the bleſſings he beſtows on them, are a proof of his tender affection towards them; nevertheleſs, as a wiſe father, he reproaches ſome of them for the wicked actions they have been guilty of. II. This patriarch gives proof of his great piety towards God, and his ſure hope in him at the approach of death. III. He foretels what was to happen afterwards to the twelve tribes; but the moſt remarkable of theſe predictions relates to the tribe of *Judah*; of which it is declared, that the ſcepter ſhould not depart from it, till *Shiloh* came. This prophecy relates to the *Meſſiah*, and points out the time of his coming. Laſtly, *Jacob*'s renewing his charge to his ſons to bury him in the land of *Canaan*, ſhews that he died in a firm belief that his poſterity ſhould poſſeſs that country, and that the promiſes of God ſhould be ſurely accompliſhed.

CHAP. L.

MOSES relates three things: I. *Joſeph*'s burying his father in the land of *Canaan*. II. His brethrens requeſt to pardon what they had done againſt him formerly, and his anſwer. III. The death of *Joſeph*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE care *Joſeph* took to bury *Jacob* in the land of *Canaan*, is a proof of his obedience to the will of his father, as well as of his piety and firm perſuaſion that the children of *Iſrael* ſhould return thither. II. The earneſt intreaty of his brethren to forgive them, ſhews, that the guilty are always

ways in fear, even long after the commiſſion of their ſin; and *Joſeph*'s kind reply to their requeſt, preſents us with a very extraordinary and affecting inſtance of piety, clemency, and meekneſs, which ſhould make great impreſſion on us. III. *Moſes* informs us, in this chapter, that *Joſeph* lived to a great and happy old age; that God made him live to ſee the proſperity of his family; and for ſome years of affliction which he had undergone in his youth, granted him a long and continued flow of proſperity. Thus we ſee how the Lord, after exerciſing his children with divers trials, grants them at laſt eaſe and tranquility; and, at length, the bleſſing of a happy death, in expectation of that recompence of their faith and piety which he has reſerved for them in the life to come. Laſtly, It is proper in this place to call to mind the reflection St. *Paul* makes on the death of *Joſeph*, in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*: That it was by faith *Joſeph*, when he was dying, commanded his bones to be carried into the land of *Canaan*. This plainly proved, that he died in a firm perſuaſion that the children of *Iſrael* ſhould leave the land of *Egypt*, and poſſeſs the country which God had promiſed to their fathers. Thus are the faithful ſupported by the promiſes of God, in life and in death.

The end of the firſt book of MOSES, *called* GENESIS.

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THE SECOND BOOK of MOSES, CALLED EXODUS.

ARGUMENT.

This book is called Exodus, *which ſignifies the going forth; becauſe it begins with the hiſtory of the going forth of the children of* Iſrael *out of* Egypt. *It contains the hiſtory of what happened to the children of* Iſrael, *from the death of* Joſeph, *to the making the tabernacle in the wilderneſs, and comprehends the ſpace of about* 140 *years.*

CHAP. I.

THE king of *Egypt* contrives to deſtroy the children of *Iſrael*, by uſing them with great ſeverity; by commanding the midwives to kill all the male children of the *Hebrews* as ſoon as they were born; and laſtly, by ordering them to be drowned in the river.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. THE multiplying of the children of *Iſrael* in *Egypt*, and the barbarous methods made uſe of by *Pharaoh* to deſtroy them, fulfil what God had foretold the patriarchs, that their poſterity ſhould be extremely increaſed; that it ſhould be afflicted in *Egypt*; and that afterwards he would bring them out from thence. II. We muſt likewiſe obſerve the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, who bleſſed the children of *Iſrael* in *Egypt*; but as he would not have them continue there, ſuffered them to be thus perſecuted, to the end they might be the more eaſily induced to leave that country. Thus God permits his children to be afflicted and perſecuted in this world, to try them, and to make them leave it without regret. The refuſal of the midwives to execute the cruel order of *Pharaoh*, and the reward that God gave them, ſhew that we muſt not obey the commands of princes when contrary to juſtice and conſcience; and that God never fails to recompence the piety and zeal of thoſe who obey him rather than men.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter contains, I. The birth of *Moſes*, and the manner of his preſervation from death, and being educated by *Pharaoh*'s daughter. II. The concern he ſhewed for thoſe of his nation, in ſlaying the *Egyptian*. III. His retreat into the land of *Midian*. IV. The death of the king of *Egypt*, and the deplorable condition of the people of *Iſrael* at that time.

REFLECTIONS.

WHEN we read in this chapter how *Moſes* was, by a particular providence, preſerved after his birth, nurſed by his own mother, and brought up at court by the king's daughter; this event ſhould lead us to admire the wonders of God's providence, who thus preſerved *Moſes* from death; and who ſo ordered it, that the expoſing of the child ſhould prove the means of his exaltation; and that he, who was one day to deliver the people of *Iſrael* from the tyranny of the *Egyptians*, ſhould be brought up by the daughter of that very prince who had undertaken to deſtroy the *Iſraelites*. *Moſes*'s killing the *Egyptian*, is to be conſidered as an extraordinary action, by no means a precedent to us; ſince *Moſes* was a man ſent by God, and called to deliver his people out of *Egypt*. It may be too, that *Moſes* had no other way of ſaving the life of the *Hebrew* that was ſmitten, or even his own life, but by killing the *Egyptian*. St. *Paul*'s remark on this paſſage is, *That by faith, Moſes, when he was come to years, refuſed to be called the ſon of Pharaoh's daughter: chuſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon.* Laſtly, When we conſider how long and how ſevere this ſlavery of the *Iſraelites* was, we learn, that God is pleaſed ſometimes to leave thoſe he loves a great while expoſed to ſufferings, before he delivers them; but that neither the duration nor ſeverity of their miſeries ſhould diſhearten them.

CHAP. III.

I. GOD appears to *Moſes* in a buſh which was in flames, without being conſumed, and tells him, That he had choſen him to conduct his people

ple out of *Egypt*; and as *Moſes* could not believe he would make uſe of him for this purpoſe, God aſſures him of his protection, and of his love to that people. II. He orders him to go and ſpeak to the *Iſraelites*, and to *Pharaoh*, and foretels what will be the ſucceſs of his commiſſion.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to make the following reflections: The firſt, regards the manner of God's calling *Moſes*, and revealing his deſign to make him the deliverer of his people *Iſrael*. By the miracle of the buſh which *Moſes* ſaw in flames without being conſumed, God was pleaſed to engage his attention, and convince him that he was there in a peculiar manner preſent. After this God ſpake to *Moſes*, and aſſured him, that the time was come in which he had determined to deliver his people from the tyranny of *Pharaoh*, and fulfil the promiſes he had before made to *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*. This might ſerve to confirm *Moſes* in his miſſion, and convince the *Iſraelites* themſelves that *Moſes* was ſent to them from God, and that the time of their deliverance was come. Hence we ſee, that God is always faithful to his covenant and promiſes; and that it is impoſſible he ſhould ever forſake his church and his people. The ſecond reflection relates to that reluctance which *Moſes* expreſſed at going to *Pharaoh*, and his unwillingneſs to believe that God would deliver his people by his means. This reluctance in *Moſes* muſt not be looked upon as an inſtance of diſobedience, but rather as an effect of his humility, and a fear of not ſucceeding, and as one of thoſe infirmities which may be found in thoſe that fear God. However, what God ſaid to *Moſes*, and the promiſes he made him of his aſſiſtance, prove, that we ought to obey God in all his commands, and believe all his

promiſes, how difficult ſoever they may appear in the execution.

CHAP. IV.

I. GOD confirms *Moſes* in his miſſion by two miraculous ſigns, and by repeated promiſes of his aſſiſtance. II. *Moſes* ſets out to go into *Egypt*, and an angel, who met him in the way, obliged him to circumciſe his ſon. *Aaron* comes to meet him, and they two acquaint the children of *Iſrael*, that God intended to deliver them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE chief obſervation upon this chapter relates to *Moſes*, who ſeveral times refuſed to go and ſpeak to the king of *Egypt*; from which, and from what God did to engage his obedience, we learn, that when God calls, it is our duty to obey the call, without fearing any thing, and without hearkning to the ſuggeſtions of the fleſh, which are apt to turn us aſide from our duty. The promiſes that God made to be with *Moſes*, the ſigns by which he confirmed his promiſes, and the power he gave him to work miracles, intimate to us, that God always affords ſtrength and means ſufficient for the execution of his commands, and that he is always with his ſervants wherever he ſends them. What happened to *Moſes* in his return to *Egypt*, when God obliged him to circumciſe his ſon, was a proof to him, that God intended circumciſion, which was a token of his covenant with the children of *Iſrael*, ſhould be obſerved. It is likewiſe a leſſon to us, that the commands of God, even thoſe which relate only to things external, and indifferent in their own nature, ought to be inviolably obſerved.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

MOSES and *Aaron* preſent themſelves before *Pharaoh*, who would not hearken to them; but, on the contrary, ordered the children of *Iſrael* to be treated with greater ſeverity; which made the *Iſraelites* murmur againſt *Moſes*, and *Moſes* himſelf complain to God of his ill ſucceſs.

REFLECTIONS.

THE courage with which *Moſes* who at firſt made ſo many difficulties at going to ſpeak to the king of *Egypt*, at length executed his commiſſion, is a proof of his obedience and zeal, and an example to the ſervants of God to obey God, and not to be afraid of men. The haughty and impious anſwer of *Pharaoh* ſhews us, that he would never have let the children of *Iſrael* go, if God had not compelled him to it by his power. Thus the hardneſs of that prince's heart occaſioned all the wonders which God wrought by the hands of *Moſes*, and brought upon the *Egyptians* thoſe ſore calamities which they were viſited with. *Pharaoh*'s ſevere treatment of the people of *Iſrael*, was another trial that God brought upon *Moſes* and the *Iſraelites*, to ſee whether they would always truſt in his promiſes, notwithſtanding the ill ſucceſs of the firſt commiſſion which he gave to *Moſes*, ſo contrary to their expectations. This inſtructs us likewiſe, that when afflictions increaſe, they are nearer their end. Laſtly, In the murmuring of the people againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron*, one may obſerve the uſual impatience and ingratitude of men. They diſtruſt the promiſes of God, if he does not immediately fulfil them, and loſe their courage at the very time that he is preparing to do them good, and giving them the ſtrongeſt aſſurances of his love.

CHAP. VI.

I. GOD ſends *Moſes* a ſecond time to the children of *Iſrael*, to aſſure them that he would deliver them; but they would not hear him. II. God commands him to go again with *Aaron* his brother, and ſpeak to *Pharaoh*. III. The ſacred hiſtorian adds the genealogy of *Moſes* and *Aaron*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the reading of this chapter, there are two things chiefly to be obſerved: I. That God gave the children of *Iſrael* freſh aſſurances of his aſſiſtance, notwithſtanding their murmuring againſt *Moſes*; whereby we ſee how gracious the Lord is, even to thoſe that offend him, and make ſo ill a return for his favours. II. We ſee that the children of *Iſrael* refuſe to hearken to *Moſes*; becauſe his firſt application to *Pharaoh* had rendered their condition much more afflicting than it was before; and that *Moſes* himſelf was afraid of returning to him, becauſe of the difficulty of the undertaking. When men do not immediately ſee the effects of God's promiſes, and are expoſed to ſufferings, the greatneſs of their afflictions, and their own infirmities, tempt them to impatience, fear and diſtruſt. But theſe temptations we ſhould overcome, by conſidering that God never forſakes his people, and that the deſigns of his providence will infallibly be executed. The genealogy of *Moſes* and *Aaron* is here ſet down, becauſe they were perſons of great conſequence, and becauſe afterwards the prieſts and other miniſters of religion, were taken from their family.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

MOSES and *Aaron* return to *Pharaoh*; and as he refuſed to let the children of *Iſrael* go, *Moſes* turned his rod into a ſerpent before him; and then he turned the waters into blood, which was the firſt of the ten plagues with which God ſmote *Egypt*; but *Pharaoh*'s magicians counterfeiting theſe two miracles, he ſtill perſiſted in his reſolution.

REFLECTIONS.

LET it be obſerved on this chapter, that when *Moſes* began to do wonders, in order to convince *Pharaoh* of the power of God, and oblige him to obey his commands, this prince was not affected with them, becauſe God permitted the magicians to imitate theſe wonders; which they did, by impoſing upon *Pharaoh* falſe and pretended miracles, which ſomewhat reſembled thoſe of *Moſes*; but were in fact nothing but contrivance and impoſture. This was a means of hardening *Pharaoh*'s heart, though he might have diſcovered in the miracles of *Moſes*, the difference between them and thoſe of his magicians. God, for the trial of men, leaves them ſome appearance of pretence for hardening themſelves; however, he always allows them ſufficient means to diſtinguiſh truth from falſhood, and to know their duty.

CHAP. VIII.

MOSES ſmites *Egypt* with a ſecond plague, which was that of frogs; and with the third, which was that of lice; which the magicians could not imitate; and the fourth, was the ſwarm of inſects.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to conſider here, I. That the firſt plagues with which God ſmote the *Egyptians* were very light; but that he ſent new ones, more ſevere, to overcome the obſtinacy of *Pharaoh*. II. That theſe plagues ought to have had the greater effect upon him, as the magicians, who had at firſt imitated ſome of *Moſes*'s miracles, could not imitate the laſt, and acknowledged the almighty power of God in them; and as the king himſelf was forced to have recourſe to the interceſſion of *Moſes* and *Aaron* to remove them. III. We ſee that notwithſtanding all this, *Pharaoh* perſiſted in his reſolution, and refuſed to let the *Iſraelites* go. All this proves, that God was not the author of this king's obduracy; that on the contrary he did all that was neceſſary to prevail upon him; and therefore that it was *Pharaoh* who hardened his own heart, as is declared ſeveral times in this chaper, and in the ſequel of this hiſtory. Herein we may diſcover, on one hand, the goodneſs and patience of God, who chaſtiſes ſinners to cure their hardneſs of heart, but defers their deſtruction a long time: on the other hand, we ſee how obſtinate and incorrigible ſome men are, who will not make a good uſe either of the chaſtiſements or long-ſuffering of the Lord. Let us alſo obſerve how God ſpared the *Iſraelites*, at the ſame time that he puniſhed the *Egyptians*. This was another miracle, which ought to have convinced *Pharaoh* and his ſubjects; and thus does God give proofs of his favour to his children, whilſt he pours out his wrath upon the wicked.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

THIS chapter contains an account of the fifth plague of *Egypt*, which was the mortality among the cattle; of the biles and blains, which was the ſixth; and of the ſtorms of hail and thunder, which was the ſeventh.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we obſerve, firſt, that the more *Pharaoh* hardened his heart, and refuſed to let the *Iſraelites* go, the greater were *Moſes*'s threatnings, and the plagues more ſevere and terrible; and that God, who could have deſtroyed this prince and all his land at once and in a moment, puniſhed them by little and little, to make his power, goodneſs, and juſtice known, and to render his name famous throughout all the earth. God, who is juſt and good, is long-ſuffering, and puniſhes men by degrees, and does not at firſt inflict the heavieſt chaſtiſements. We have here new and more convincing proofs of the prodigious hardneſs of *Pharaoh*'s heart, and his exceeding wickedneſs; who, when he was purſued by the divine corrections, acknowledged his guilt, and promiſed to let the people go, if *Moſes* would remove the plagues; but as ſoon as he was delivered from them, refuſed to keep his word. Such is the character of the wicked. They ſeem to be ſoftned when God afflicts them, and make great promiſes of amendment; but fall again into their hardneſs and impenitence, and break their vows, as ſoon as the affliction is over, and they have a little reſpite. This is a very important leſſon, which all of us ought to make a good uſe of.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

I. *MOSES* ſmites *Egypt* with the locuſts, which was the eighth plague. II. After this God ſends the ninth plague, which was that of darkneſs; which ſo terrified *Pharaoh*, that he conſented the *Iſraelites* ſhould depart, provided they left their cattle behind them; but *Moſes* refuſing to accept of theſe terms, *Pharaoh* forbids him any more to come into his preſence.

REFLECTIONS.

THE moſt remarkable circumſtance in this chapter, beſides what has been obſerved on the foregoing, is, that *Pharaoh*, terrified by the judgments of God, and importuned by his own ſubjects to let the children of *Iſrael* go, conſented to let one part of the people go; but would not ſuffer them to take their cattle with them; which brought upon him the laſt and moſt dreadful of all the plagues. The behaviour of this prince is very like thoſe ſinners, who, inſtead of yielding to, and obeying without reſerve whatever is commanded by God, will only pay a partial obedience, and cannot reſolve with themſelves entirely to renounce all their paſſions and intereſts. We ſee here likewiſe to what a degree *Pharaoh* hardened himſelf; ſince neither the goodneſs of God, nor his judgments, could tame him; and that though he promiſed *Moſes* he would no longer withſtand God, if he delivered him from theſe plagues, he forgot all his promiſes as ſoon as the plagues ceaſed; and even went ſo far as to threaten to put *Moſes* to death. Nothing can prevail upon men who are arrived to a certain degree of blindneſs and wickedneſs: even if they appear affected and humbled in diſtreſs, they return to their firſt ſentiments,

ments, as ſoon as it is over; thus do obſtinate ſinners run headlong to their own deſtruction, and ſtrengthen themſelves more and more in their wickedneſs. This ought to inſpire us with a holy dread of falling into the like obduracy and impenitence.

CHAP. XI.

GOD acquaints *Moſes*, that he was going to ſend the tenth, and laſt plague upon *Egypt*, which would be the death of the firſt-born; and that after that the people of *Iſrael* ſhould go out freely; and commands the *Iſraelites* to borrow of the *Egyptians* veſſels of gold and ſilver, and carry them away with them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt reflection to be made here for our inſtruction is, that the *Iſraelites* might juſtly carry away with them the gold and ſilver veſſels of the *Egyptians*, becauſe they did it by the order of God, who is the abſolute Lord of all things, and beſtows the things of this world on whom he pleaſes; and on this occaſion thought fit to make up to the *Iſraelites* the loſſes they had ſuſtained by the injuſtice of the *Egyptians*. II. We muſt remember, what has been already obſerved, that *Pharaoh*'s obſtinacy and hardneſs of heart, ought to be attributed to nothing but his own deſperate wickedneſs; and though it be often ſaid in this hiſtory, that God hardened *Pharaoh*'s heart, it muſt not be underſtood, as if God was the author of his obſtinacy: it denotes only that God certainly knew that he would harden himſelf, that God would permit him ſo to do, and that he would even do ſome things, which that prince would abuſe, and take occaſion from them to harden himſelf ſtill the more. God wiſely, and juſtly permits ſinners to harden

harden themſelves, and to have an opportunity of confirming themſelves in their wickedneſs; yet he is by no means the cauſe of ſin and impenitence; their deſtruction is entirely owing to themſelves and not to God; who, far from being the cauſe of it, does all that is neceſſary to keep them from falling into it.

CHAP. XII. 1—28.

THE firſt part of this chapter contains the inſtitution of the paſſover.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt thing to be obſerved on this chapter is, that the inſtitution of the paſſover is ſet down exactly by *Moſes*, becauſe this ceremony was one of the moſt conſiderable in the *Jewiſh* religion. II. That when God was ready to deliver his people out of *Egypt*, he ordered them to ſacrifice in every family a lamb, to eat it, and to ſprinkle their houſes with the blood; that the angel who was to deſtroy the firſt-born of *Egypt* might ſpare the families of the *Iſraelites*. By this ceremony, and by the ſolemn ſacrifice of the paſſover, God deſigned to convince the children of *Iſrael*, that the gods of the *Egyptians* were but idols; that he was the true God, and by his power and mercy was going to deliver them. To preſerve the memory of this great event, God commanded them to keep the paſſover every year, by ſacrificing a lamb. He ordered them alſo to eat unleavened bread at the feaſt of the paſſover, becauſe they came out of *Egypt* in ſuch haſte, that they were forced to bake their dough before it was leavened. This hiſtory is remarkable in itſelf; but ſtill more ſo, as it is a clear and expreſs type of that great deliverance which God has vouchſafed us by our Lord

Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt, who is the true lamb of God, that taketh away the ſins of the world; our real paſſover, that was ſacrificed for us.

CHAP. XII. 29—51.

MOSES gives us the hiſtory of the death of the firſt-born of the *Egyptians*, and of the children of *Iſrael*'s going out of *Egypt*; with a repetition of the law of the paſſover.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn from this hiſtory, that God at laſt ſubdued the haughtineſs of *Pharaoh*, and conſtrained him to let the children of *Iſrael* go; that they had full liberty to depart, and went out with great riches. This memorable event proves that nothing can withſtand the infinite power of God: it proves likewiſe the love of God to his people, and the truth of thoſe promiſes which he had made of delivering them from the ſlavery under which they had ſo long groaned. We ſee likewiſe, that he was pleaſed the memory of ſo wonderful a deliverance ſhould be preſerved by the feaſt of paſſover; and that he gave an expreſs law, binding all the *Iſraelites*, upon pain of death, to ſolemnize this ſacrament every year. This ſhews, that we are indiſpenſably obliged to obſerve the divine inſtructions; and above all, that we ſhould never forget God's favours towards us; but eſpecially what *Jeſus Chriſt* has done to ſave us; and that Chriſtians in particular are under the ſtricteſt obligation to celebrate with true devotion that holy ſupper, which our Lord himſelf appointed for a memorial of his death.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

I. *MOSES* repeats the law for the obſervation of the paſſover, and commands them to conſecrate their firſt-born. II. He afterwards acquaints us, that God thought fit the children of *Iſrael* ſhould take the way of the wilderneſs, when they were got out of *Egypt*.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD's deſign in commanding the people of *Iſrael* to celebrate the paſſover every year, was to perpetuate among them the remembrance of their departure out of *Egypt*; and that other law which required them to dedicate to God all their firſt-born, was appointed in order to remind their poſterity, that God had ſpared their firſt-born, when he deſtroyed thoſe of the *Egyptians*. Hence we ſhould learn never to forget the mercies of God, and to teſtify our gratitude by devoting to him our perſons, and all that is moſt near and dear to us. The expreſs command of God to the *Iſraelites*, to inform their children of that wonderful deliverance from the *Egyptian* bondage, which he had vouchſafed to their nation, is a clear proof, that it is the duty of parents to train up their children in the knowledge and fear of God; but above all, that they ought to be particularly careful to inſtruct them in the wonderful work of man's redemption by *Jeſus Chriſt*. It is obſerved in this chapter, that God would not have the *Iſraelites* go into the land of *Canaan* the ſhorteſt way; but made them go by the way of the red ſea, and of the wilderneſs: becauſe this people, who were not yet trained to war, were very unfit to fight with the *Canaanites*; and becauſe God intended to work new wonders for them in the red ſea and in the wilderneſs, by leading them

them through the ſea on dry ground, by drowning *Pharaoh* in it, and by feeding them in a miraculous manner in the wilderneſs. Laſtly, The manner of God's conducting the *Iſraelites* by a pillar of a cloud and of fire, is a proof of the great power of God, and of his care and protection of his children.

CHAP. XIV.

PHARAOH reſolving to purſue the children of *Iſrael*, is drowned, with all his army, in the red ſea, which the *Iſraelites* had paſſed over on dry ground.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we obſerve, I. That God, by leading the *Iſraelites* to the ſhore of the red ſea, and ſuffering *Pharaoh* to overtake them with his army, expoſed them to great danger, and that they were extremely alarmed and terrified at it. But God thus dealt with them that his power might appear with greater luſtre, in their miraculous deliverance when they paſſed through the ſea on foot, and in the utter deſtruction of *Pharaoh*, who with all his army periſhed in the waters. II. This hiſtory repreſents the blindneſs and ſurpriſing obſtinacy of the king of *Egypt*, who, after all the plagues with which God had ſmote him, obſtinately purſued the people of *Iſrael*, and even dared to go into the red ſea after them. In this hiſtory we are to obſerve very attentively, on one hand, what obſtinate ſinners are capable of, and with what blindneſs and fury they haſten to their own ruin; and on the other hand, the mighty power of God diſplayed in the deliverance of his children, and the deſtruction of his enemies.

CHAP. XV.

TWO things are related in this chapter, I. The ſong of the *Iſraelites*, upon *Pharaoh*'s being drowned. II. Their murmuring againſt *Moſes*, becauſe they met with no water in the deſert, and becauſe the waters of *Marah* were bitter; and the miracle that *Moſes* wrought on this occaſion.

REFLECTIONS.

THE ſong which *Moſes*, and *Miriam* his ſiſter, and the children of *Iſrael* ſung, after *Pharaoh* and his army were drowned in the red ſea, is the moſt ancient hymn we read of in hiſtory. In it we have the ſtrongeſt expreſſions of joy, and of gratitude towards God; herein they celebrate that almighty power, which had been ſo glorioufly diſplayed in their deliverance; and profeſs their belief that God would put them in poſſeſſion of the land of *Canaan*; and that the inhabitants of that country, terrified and aſtoniſhed, would not be able to reſiſt them. Thus ſhould we, and with ſtill greater zeal, praiſe the Lord for his favours, and chiefly for his mercy and power, manifeſted in the work of our redemption by our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. We have ſeen, in the next place, that God had no ſooner vouchſafed the *Iſraelites* ſo great a deliverance, but they immediately began to murmur againſt him, and diſtruſt his providence, becauſe they wanted water; and then becauſe the waters he gave them were bitter: however, God was ſo gracious as to work a new miracle for them, and make thoſe waters ſweet. Such is the infidelity and ingratitude of men, who can ſo ſoon forget the divine bleſſings, and ſo eaſily fall into impatience: but the Lord is long-ſuffering towards them, and

ſtill

ſtill gives them freſh proofs of his love, and grants them favours which they are unworthy of.

CHAP. XVI.

THE *Iſraelites* murmuring againſt *Moſes*, becauſe they had nothing to eat; God ſends them quails, and manna, which was their food in the wilderneſs for the ſpace of forty years.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS hiſtory affords another proof of the ingratitude of the children of *Iſrael*, who, after they had ſo many times experienced the divine power and protection, were always murmuring againſt *Moſes*, and longing after *Egypt*, from whence they came. Obſerve however the goodneſs of God, who was pleaſed to put a ſtop to thoſe murmurings, and provide food for them, ſending them manna, which was their food the forty years they were in the wilderneſs. II. It is to be remarked, that the manna fell every morning, except on the ſabbath-day; and that it ſtank if they gathered more than was ſufficient for one day. Theſe were ſo many miracles, to convince the *Iſraelites* that it was God who fed them in this miraculous manner. Laſtly, This hiſtory ſhould remind us of what *Jeſus Chriſt* tells us in the goſpel, *John* vi. that the children of *Iſrael* did not eat the true bread from heaven; that the manna which they did eat in the wilderneſs could not preſerve them from death; whereas in *Jeſus Chriſt* we have that true bread that came down from heaven, which gives us everlaſting life. Let us beſeech him to give us always this heavenly food, whilſt we are in the wilderneſs of this world; and when he gives it to us, let us make a better uſe of it, than the *Jews* did formerly of the manna that

God gave them, and of all the other mercies they received from the divine bounty in the wilderneſs.

CHAP. XVII.

THIS chapter has two parts: in the firſt, *Moſes* relates the miracle of the water, which God made to ſpring out of the rock, to ſtop the murmuring of the people: and in the ſecond, the victory obtained by the children of *Iſrael* over the *Amalekites*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE miracle wrought by *Moſes* in bringing water out of the rock, to allay the thirſt and ſtop the murmurings of the *Iſraelites*, leads us to reflect upon the incredulity of that people, who were always diſtruſting the power of God, and ſo often rebelling againſt *Moſes*; as well as to conſider the great patience of the Lord, in working this new miracle for them. The victory over the *Amalekites* is an inſtance of the juſt puniſhment of God, inflicted on the enemies of his people; but we muſt particularly take notice, that God granted this victory to the prayers of *Moſes*, that the *Iſraelites* might know God was the author and giver of it. By this example we learn, that calling upon the name of God, and perſeverance in prayer, is the moſt effectual way to obtain his aſſiſtance, and to triumph over all our enemies, both ſpiritual and temporal.

CHAP. XVIII.

JETHRO, the father-in-law of *Moſes*, brings him his wife and his two ſons, and adviſes him

to

to appoint judges and officers for the government of the people of *Iſrael*; which *Moſes* did.

REFLECTIONS.

JETHRO, the father-in-law of *Moſes*, came to ſee him, not only to bring him his wife and children, but chiefly to rejoice with him, and with all the people, upon God's delivering them from the bondage of *Egypt*. This example of *Jethro*'s zeal, piety and charity, ſhould excite us to ſhare in the happineſs of our brethren; and eſpecially to rejoice when the glory of God is promoted, and his power and juſtice manifeſted to all the world. II. What is ſaid in this chapter concerning the appointment of judges and magiſtrates, and the qualities they ought to have, teaches us, that thoſe who are in civil employments ought to diſcharge them with diligence and integrity; that they ſhould be perſons fearing God, virtuous, juſt, and above all, diſintereſted, and not fond of filthy lucre. This too ſhould convince us of the abſolute neceſſity of magiſtrates for the well ordering of ſociety; that they are of divine appointment, and that every one ought to ſubmit to them and their authority.

CHAP. XIX.

I. THE people of *Iſrael* coming to the wilderneſs of *Sinai*, *Moſes* acquaints them, that God intended to make a covenant with them, and orders them to ſanctify themſelves, and be prepared to hear the promulgation of the law. II. Three days after, God comes down upon mount *Sinai* with the marks of his power and majeſty.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is chiefly to be obſerved in this chapter is, that as ſoon as God had delivered his people out of *Egypt*, he gave them the law: a plain proof, that his deſign of making choice of this people, and ſeparating them from other nations, was to eſtabliſh pure religion among them, and engage them to fear him. This is the end he has always had in view; and he has redeemed and choſen us for his people, for no other end but that we might ſerve him in holineſs and righteouſneſs. God required the *Jews* to prepare and ſanctify themſelves, before they heard the publication of the law, to teach them that this law was given unto men only for their ſanctification. The manner in which it was publiſhed, and the dreadful and majeſtic apparatus to the Lord's deſcending on mount *Sinai*, was deſigned to convince them that it was God who ſpake to them, to inſpire them with fear, and teach them and all mankind that thoſe that ſhall break theſe laws ſhall not eſcape his vengeance.

CHAP. XX.

IN this chapter we ſee, I. The publication of the ten commandments of the law. II. The terror that ſeized the *Iſraelites* when they heard the voice of God. III. God forbids the making of idols, and preſcribes the manner of building their altars.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things in this chapter which chiefly demand our attention; namely, the law itſelf which was publiſhed, and the terror which ſeized the *Iſraelites* at the time of its promulgation.

On

On the law itſelf we are to conſider, I. The dignity and authority of it; ſince it was publiſhed by God himſelf, and attended with ſuch tranſcendent marks of his power. II. That this law concerns us as well as the *Jews*, ſince it contains nothing but what is perfectly juſt; and our Saviour himſelf has told us that he came not to aboliſh the law, but, rather, to lay us under a ſtricter obligation to fulfil it. III. We muſt remember that this law does not only forbid thoſe ſins which are therein particularly mentioned, but that it regulates our thoughts and deſires, as well as our actions; and that God will judge us all by this law, as it is explained in the goſpel. The exceeding great dread that came upon the *Iſraelites* when God publiſhed his law, ſhould put us in mind of what St. *Paul* ſays on this ſubject, in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews:* that *we are not come unto mount Sinai, nor have heard that terrible voice, which made the Jews intreat that the word ſhould not be ſpoken to them any more: but that we are come unto mount Sion, and have heard the voice of Jeſus, the mediator of the new covenant; that if they eſcaped not, who refuſed him that ſpake on earth, much more ſhall not we eſcape, if we turn away from him that ſpeaketh from heaven; that our God is a conſuming fire; and that therefore we ought to ſerve him with reverence and godly fear, ſo that we may be accepted by him.* The laws ſet down at the end of this chapter, concerning idols and altars, tended to keep the children of *Iſrael* at a diſtance from idolatry; to prevent religion from being altered, and make the divine ſervice be performed with decency.

CHAP. XXI. 1,—17.

THIS chapter and the following contain ſundry laws that God gave *Moſes* upon mount *Sinai*, to be delivered by him to the people of *Iſrael*; moſt of which are political. Thoſe contained in the former part of this chapter concern the right which maſters had over their ſlaves, the puniſhment of murderers, of parricides, of men-ſtealers, and of thoſe that curſe father or mother.

REFLECTIONS.

THE political laws that God gave the *Jews* are worthy the ſerious attention, not only of judges and magiſtrates, that they may conform to them as much as poſſible, in all things that are not peculiar to the *Iſraelites*, to the land of *Canaan*, and to thoſe times, but of every other perſon; as they contain very excellent precepts of juſtice, and charity, and many other duties. Upon the laws concerning ſlaves, it muſt be obſerved, that ſlavery is aboliſhed among Chriſtians; and therefore that theſe laws do not reſpect us directly. However, we may conclude from them, that the will of God is, that ſervants ſhould be faithful to their maſters, and that maſters ſhould treat their ſervants with tenderneſs and humanity. We learn likewiſe in this chapter, that murderers, men-ſtealers, and thoſe that curſe father or mother, are guilty of very enormous crimes, which the magiſtrate ought to puniſh ſeverely; and we may judge from thence, that God will not leave them unpuniſhed. Theſe are crimes, which ought not to be ſo much as known among Chriſtians, no more than ſeveral others mentioned in the laws of *Moſes*.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI. 18,—36.

GOD preſcribes laws to be obſerved with reſpect to thoſe that ſmote or wounded any one, even their own ſlaves, or whoſe cattle did any damage.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM the reading of this chapter we learn, I. That thoſe who ſmite or wound their neighbours, ought not to go unpuniſhed. II. That thoſe who occaſion any evil to their neighbour, whether wilfully or accidentally, and without any evil intention, ſhould ſuffer for it, and ought to repair the damage as much as may be. III. That although ſlavery obtained among the *Jews*, God did not intend they ſhould treat their ſlaves cruelly and inhumanly, as other nations did; from whence it appears, that Chriſtians ſhould behave with ſtill greater meekneſs and gentleneſs towards their ſervants. Laſtly it muſt be obſerved, that theſe words, *an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*, do not authorize private revenge, but only denote the puniſhment that judges were to inflict upon ſuch as aſſaulted and wounded their neighbour; otherwiſe, we ſhould be ſo far from returning evil for evil, that we ought, as Chriſt obſerves in the fifth chapter of St. *Matthew*, where this law is mentioned, to bear injuries patiently, not to avenge ourſelves, nor always inſiſt upon what is ſtrictly our right, but to imitate that meekneſs and patience which *Jeſus Chriſt* our redeemer has given us an example of.

CHAP. XXII.

THIS chapter mentions the puniſhment of thoſe that ſteal or deſtroy their neighbour's goods, and their obligation to make reſtitution: to which are added ſeveral other laws concerning goods that have been pledged or lent; concerning impurity, idolatry, oppreſſion, uſury, the reſpect due to magiſtrates, and the firſt fruits, which the *Jews* were to offer to God.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we have ſeveral inſtructions. The firſt (which is repeated ſeveral times) is, that they who have wronged their neighbour in any manner, either by theft, cheating, or even unwittingly and imprudently, are obliged to make reſtitution; and that things that have been intruſted with or lent to any one, ſhould be faithfully returned. II. We ſee likewiſe here that an oath may be taken to put an end to diſputes; that oaths ſhould be had in reverence; that the ſin of uncleanneſs ſhould as much as poſſible be remedied by marriage, and that God would have idolaters put to death as well as witches and enchanters, and other perſons who uſed unlawful arts. III. God declares, in the moſt expreſs manner, that it is a great crime to oppreſs the fatherleſs, the widows, and the ſtrangers, and rigorouſly to exact the payment of a debt from the poor and needy; that theſe are ſins which cry to God for vengeance, and provoke his wrath. IV. Here likewiſe we learn to ſpeak always of magiſtrates with reverence and reſpect. Laſtly, The obligation laid upon the *Jews* to offer their firſt fruits to God, ſhews that religion lays us under an obligation to devote ſome part of thoſe good

good things which God hath given us, to works of piety and charity.

CHAP. XXIII.

THE laws here preſcribed relate, I. To ſlander, equity, humanity, and juſtice. II. They concern the duty of judges. III. The obſervation of the ſabbath, and of the ſabbatical year; and of the three great feaſts of the *Jews*, which were the paſſover, pentecoſt, and the feaſt of tabernacles. IV. God promiſes to ſend his angel to conduct the people into the land of *Canaan*, and orders them to deſtroy the *Canaanites*, not all at once, but by little and little; forbidding the people to imitate, or even tolerate in any degree, the idolatry of the *Canaanites*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we find the following inſtructions. I. That it is our duty to avoid ſlander and evil ſpeaking. II. That judges ought to adminiſter juſtice with uprightneſs and integrity, without reſpect of perſons, and eſpecially without taking any bribe. III. That the *Jews* were to keep holy the ſabbath-day, and moreover to let the land reſt every ſeventh year; which was deſigned to teach them to truſt in God's providence, and to be charitable to the poor; which is our duty as well as theirs. IV. As the three ſolemn feaſts of the *Iſraelites* were appointed in order to preſerve among them the remembrance of thoſe ſignal favours which God had conferred on their nation; it is meet and right that Chriſtians alſo ſhould diſcharge the duties of gratitude and thankfulneſs, eſpecially for the mercies they receive in *Jeſus Chriſt*. V. The law which forbids the ſeething the kid in his mother's milk was given in oppoſition

ſition to a ſuperſtitious and idolatrous cuſtom among the neighbouring nations, who practiſed this ceremony when they were gathering their fruits; for which reaſon this prohibition is joined with the law concerning the firſt fruits. VI. The promiſe which God made of ſending his angel to conduct the *Jews* into the land of *Canaan*, and the command he gave them to hearken to the voice of that angel, and not to provoke him, ſhould be a warning to us, not to provoke the Lord by our diſobedience, who is in the midſt of us, but to reverence him, and obey his voice. Laſtly, We have here an inſtance of the goodneſs and wiſdom of God, who, introducing the children of *Iſrael* into the land of *Canaan*, ſent a terror upon the *Canaanites*, but did not however deſtroy them all at once, leſt, the country being depopulated, the wild beaſts ſhould increaſe upon them. This was a very convincing proof of his care over them; and a powerful motive to flee from idolatry, and inviolably adhere to the ſervice of the true God.

CHAP. XXIV.

I. MOSES makes a covenant with the people of *Iſrael*, and ſolemnly engages them to obſerve the laws of God. II. Afterwards he goes up to mount *Sinai*, where he remained forty days and forty nights, without either eating or drinking, as we are told in the thirty-fourth chapter of this book. During which time God gave him the model of the tabernacle which was to be prepared, and of all its parts.

REFLECTIONS.

THE vow which *Moſes* engaged the people to make, that they would keep the law of God, and

and the great ſolemnity with which this vow was attended, and the covenant between God and the people confirmed, lead us to conſider, that ſince God has choſen us to be his people, and has made known his will to us, we are indiſpenſibly bound to keep his laws, as we have likewiſe ſolemnly engaged to do. This St. *Paul* teaches us in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, where he ſays, *That when Moſes had ſpoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood of the victims, and ſprinkled both the book and all the people, ſaying, This is the blood of the covenant which God has made with you;* but that *Jeſus Chriſt* has confirmed the new covenant, *not with the blood of calves and goats, but by his own blood, having offered himſelf up to God a ſacrifice without ſpot or blemiſh, that he might purify our conſciences from dead works, to ſerve the living God.* From whence we may conclude, that our covenant with God is ſtill more holy than that made with the *Iſraelites* by the mediation of *Moſes*, and that thoſe who ſhall violate it have reaſon to expect the moſt ſevere puniſhment. *Moſes*'s abode on mount *Sinai* forty days, his miraculous faſt all that time, and the cloud covering the mountain, as a token of the divine preſence, in the ſight of the elders and all the people, prove the divine legation of *Moſes*, and the authority of his law. As *Moſes* faſted, ſo did our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* faſt forty days in the wilderneſs, before he entered upon his miniſtry.

CHAP. XXV.

GOD commands *Moſes* to exhort the people to contribute to the building of the tabernacle, and gives the model of the ark, and of the mercy-ſeat which covered the ark; of the table, whereon was

was to be laid what they called the ſhew-bread, and of the candleſtick.

Reflections.

I. ON this and the following chapters we muſt obſerve in general, that God preſcribed to the *Iſraelites* a form of worſhip, which it was not lawful for them to depart from, and ſo ordered all the circumſtances of it, that no innovation or alteration could be made in it. This was neceſſary to keep that people attached to the worſhip of the true God, and at a diſtance from falſe and idolatrous worſhip, which they would have eaſily fallen into, if they had been left at liberty to perform divine ſervice as they had thought proper. II. The form of worſhip appointed by God made a fine appearance, and was attended with many pompous ceremonies; in which God condeſcended to the notions and ſentiments of the children of *Iſrael*, who were a rude and unrefined people, whoſe inclinations would have led them to worſhip the deity after the manner of other nations, and who would not have been contented with a worſhip attended with nothing but plainneſs and ſimplicity. III. God thought fit there ſhould be a tabernacle made, which was a kind of tent where divine ſervice was performed, where the people aſſembled for acts of religion, and where God exhibited the tokens of his preſence. He gave an exact model of the ark, of the table, of the candleſtick, and of every thing in and about the tabernacle. Laſtly, We are to conſider that theſe things were appointed as proper for thoſe times, and that they ſerved for an example and ſhadow of heavenly things. This is the reflection which St. *Paul* makes in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews* on the laſt words of this chapter, *Look that thou make them after the pattern which was ſhewed thee in the mount.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVI.

IN this chapter we have a deſcription, I. Of the curtains, of the hangings, and covering of the tabernacle. II. Of the boards, ſockets and bars, which ſerved to carry the tabernacle. III. Of the vail which divided the holy place, where was the altar of incenſe, the table and the candleſtick, from the moſt holy place, where the ark was ſet. IV. Of the hanging which was at the entrance of the tabernacle.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the reflections on the preceding chapter, a reaſon was aſſigned why God gave ſuch expreſs command concerning the form of the tabernacle and all its parts; and why he ordered it to be built with the ſeveral ornaments, and with that magnificence obſervable in it. We are to obſerve in this chapter, I. That as the tabernacle was to be often removed from place to place, eſpecially while the *Iſraelites* ſojourned in the wilderneſs, it was made in ſuch a manner as to be eaſily taken to pieces and put together again. II. That the ſervice which was performed in the tabernacle, and continued in the temple of *Jeruſalem*, was to laſt no longer than till the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*. This appeared by the rending of the vail, which was at the entrance of the moſt holy place, at the time of our Lord's crucifixion; which, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks, ſignified, that the way into the holy place was not made manifeſt while the firſt tabernacle was yet ſtanding; that the legal worſhip was drawing to an end, and that the entrance into the heavenly ſanctuary would be from thenceforth open unto men through *Jeſus Chriſt*.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

THIS chapter contains directions concerning the altar of burnt offerings, the court of the tabernacle, and the lamps that were to be burning in the tabernacle all night.

REFLECTIONS.

THE altar of burnt offerings was placed before the door of the tabernacle; and on this altar they offered the whole burnt-offerings, that is, thoſe ſacrifices that were made by fire, and wholly conſumed. The court before the tabernacle was a large court where the prieſts and Levites officiated, and where the people aſſembled for divine ſervice. The law concerning the lamps which were to burn in the tabernacle in the night was appointed becauſe God was pleaſed to have that holy place enlightened in darkneſs, to prevent any inconvenience that might have happened, and that his miniſters might attend there and praiſe him continually.

CHAP. XXVIII.

AARON and his ſons are choſen by God to exerciſe the prieſt's office; *Aaron*'s dreſs when he was to perform divine ſervice is appointed, and the veſtments of the other prieſts are regulated.

REFLECTIONS.

THE laws relating to the holy veſtments were deſigned to inſpire the people of *Iſrael* with reſpect for the divine ſervice, and to render the miniſters of religion venerable. God intended likewiſe, by this means, to engage the prieſts themſelves to reverence the character they were inveſted with.

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This was in particular the deſign of theſe words graven upon a plate of gold faſtened to the mitre of the high-prieſt, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. It is the will of God that religion be reſpected, that thoſe who miniſter about holy things be had in reverence, and that they endeavour to recommend themſelves in the ſight of God and man by the decency and gravity of their behaviour, by the holineſs of their lives, and by the faithful diſcharge of the duties of their function. This is particularly required of the miniſters of the new covenant, whoſe office is ſtill more holy than that of the prieſts under the old teſtament.

CHAP. XXIX.

I. GOD preſcribes the manner of conſecrating and appointing *Aaron* and the other prieſts to their office, and aſſigns them a portion in the ſacrifices. II. He commands the continual ſacrifice, which was to be offered every morning and every evening; and promiſes the *Iſraelites* to be with them and dwell amongſt them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE ſolemn rites and ceremonies which, by God's command, were practiſed when *Aaron* and his ſons were conſecrated and ſet apart to their office, tended to convince the people that they were God's miniſters, and that their functions were all holy. God has given laws ſtill more important, and not leſs expreſs, concerning the calling of paſtors and teachers in the Chriſtian Church, which laws ought to be inviolably obſerved. II. The law concerning the morning and evening ſacrifice is founded on the obligation all men are under to ſerve God continually; and, in particular, of offering him at the

the beginning and end of every day, the ſacrifice of their prayers and praiſes. III. If God promiſed the *Iſraelites* to dwell amongſt them, we cannot doubt but he is in a more intimate manner preſent to defend and protect the Chriſtian church. This St. *Paul* proves, when he applies the promiſe in this chapter to Chriſtians, *I will dwell amongſt them, and will be their God*; and when he exhorts them, from this very conſideration, to *cleanſe themſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.*

CHAP. XXX.

I. GOD gives *Moſes* a model of the altar of incenſe, and directions for the uſe of it. II. He commands all the *Iſraelites* from twenty years old to pay half a ſhekel for the uſes of the tabernacle. III. He gives orders for the making a large laver of braſs, where the prieſts were to waſh their hands and feet, before they performed divine ſervice. IV. He gives directions for making the holy oil to anoint the prieſts, and the tabernacle, and all things in it; and for making the holy perfume.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE altar of incenſe was ſet in the holy place before the vail: on this altar they burnt incenſe morning and evening; and once in a year, which was on the day of atonement, the high-prieſt made propitiation for the people with the blood of the victims, poured on the horns of this altar. II. The half ſhekel which all the *Iſraelites*, rich and poor, were to pay, was a tribute and homage paid to God, and ſerved to put them in mind of their dependence upon him. This money was appointed to ſupply the neceſſary expences of the tabernacle. And

Chriſ-

Chriſtians are not leſs obliged to acknowledge their dependance on God for all that they poſſeſs. III. God commanded the prieſts to waſh themſelves before they performed any of their miniſterial functions, to teach them and all the people to preſent themſelves before the Lord with purity of heart. IV. The ſtrict charge not to employ the holy oil and perfume to any other uſes than thoſe preſcribed in the law, tended to inſpire men with greater reverence for religion, and things ſet apart for divine ſervice.

CHAP. XXXII.

I. GOD names the artificers that were to labour in the works of the tabernacle. II. He repeats the law for the obſervation of the ſabbath. III. He gives *Moſes* the two tables of the law.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are four reflections to be made on this chapter, I. That God did not leave it to the people to make choice of perſons to work in the tabernacle, but named thoſe who were to have the principal direction of this work, that it might appear that every thing relating to the divine ſervice was done by his order and authority. II. We find by this and the following chapters, that though the children of *Iſrael* had been in a ſtate of oppreſſion in *Egypt*, there were nevertheleſs among them ſome perſons of both ſexes who had ingenuity and capacity for all kinds of workmanſhip. III. God on this occaſion repeated the law concerning the obſervation of the ſabbath, leſt thoſe who were to work in the tabernacle might imagine themſelves at liberty not to reſt on that day. And the frequent repetitions of this law, as well as the puniſhment of death

denounced against the transgressors of it, prove the great importance of it. The constant observation of this day of rest, served to remind the *Jews* that they were worshippers of the true God, and to keep them from falling into idolatry. IV. After God had pronounced the law from mount *Sinai*, he was pleased to engrave it upon tables of stone, that it might be preserved to future ages without alteration. It has always been the will of God that men should adhere to his word, and to the revelation he has made of his will, without adding to it, or diminishing from it, or making the least alteration; and that they should make it the unalterable rule of their faith and practice.

CHAP. XXXII.

WE have here the history of the *Israelites* idolatrous worship of the golden calf, and the manner in which *Moses* punished them for that sin.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE we are to consider, I. The great sin of the *Israelites*, who, notwithstanding the many warnings God had given them to avoid idolatry, and the solemn promises they had lately made in the covenant *Moses* had entered into with them, made a golden calf and worshipped it, in imitation of the idolatry of the *Egyptians*. And let it be remarked, that though they pretended to worship the true God under the similitude of a golden calf, they were nevertheless guilty of real idolatry, this being expressly forbidden in the law; which shews, that it is absolutely unlawful to worship any image, and that those things which God has forbid cannot be rendered lawful by the intention. II. We may likewise learn from the weakness of *Aaron*, who, instead of oppos-

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ing this idolatry, consented to it, that timorousness and compliance, especially in persons of a public character, are often attended with very fatal consequences, and that they become exceeding guilty before God, in not resolutely and manfully opposing wickedness and vice. III. The great charity of *Moses*, who interceded with so much zeal for the children of *Israel*, should serve as a motive to all good men, particularly God's ministers, to intercede and pray for sinners; and the regard God had to the intercession of *Moses*, shews, that the prayer of the righteous availeth much with God. IV. The manner in which the Levites punished the idolatry of the people, must be acknowledged to be very just, though it was severe, God having expressly ordered to put those to death that were guilty of idolatry. Lastly, When we read this history we should call to mind what St. *Paul* says, 1 *Cor.* x. That these things are our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as did the *Israelites*; and that we should not imitate them in their idolatry, their lewdness and disobedience.

CHAP. XXXIII.

FOUR things are here mentioned: I. The humiliation of the *Israelites*, after their idolatry in worshipping the golden calf. II. The manner of erecting the tabernacle, which was the place where the people assembled to hear the will of God, without the camp; and how God there spake to *Moses*. III. *Moses* again intercedes with God to pardon the *Israelites*, and to be ever with them. IV. He requests of God to shew him his glory.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE example of the *Israelites*, who stript themselves of their ornaments, after they had

been punished for their idolatry, teaches us to humble ourselves when we have offended God, and to give all possible proofs of our contrition when God is angry with us. II. The manner in which God spake, and communicated himself to *Moses*, shews that he was a very great prophet, and that his laws and his doctrine came from God, and consequently, that they ought to be considered by us with great respect. III. In the prayers that *Moses* continued to offer up in behalf of the *Israelites*, we ought to observe the extreme tenderness he had for them, and his great zeal for the glory of God. If those whom God has appointed the governors of his church, would follow his example, they would never cease to pray for those committed to their charge. IV. God's answer to *Moses*, when that prophet besought him to let him see his glory, shews us, that *God dwells in inaccessible light*, as St. *Paul* says, 1 *Tim.* vi. *and that no man can see him in this life.* But this ought to convince us, that *Jesus Christ* our Lord is infinitely above *Moses*; *since he has seen God and was with him from the beginning*, John i. Lastly, We ought to believe, that though we cannot see God in this life, we shall see him as he is in the life to come; and *this hope should engage us to purify ourselves as he is pure*, 1 John iii.

CHAP. XXXIV.

I. GOD gives *Moses* the second tables of the law. II. He appears to him in a cloud. III. He promises to bring the children of *Israel* into the land of *Canaan*, commanding them to destroy the idols of the *Canaanites*, and to have no dealings with them. IV. God repeats the laws concerning the passover, the consecration of the first-born, the dedication of the first-fruits, the observation of

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the ſabbath, and other ſolemn feaſts. V. After this *Moſes* comes down from the mount, and covers his face with a veil, becauſe it was very bright, and the people could not ſtedfaſtly look upon him.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we ſee, that at the interceſſion of *Moſes*, God pardoned the children of *Iſrael*; that he gave them a ſecond time the tables of the law, and promiſed to bring them into the land of *Canaan*; in which we are to acknowledge the great mercy of God, and the efficacy of the interceſſion of good men. II. *Moſes* informs us, that when he deſired to ſee the glory of God, he ſaw it but in part; and that God ſaid nothing on this occaſion, but that he was merciful and full of compaſſion; and that he was alſo righteous, and would *by no means clear the guilty*. God makes himſelf known to us in this life, as far as is neceſſary to induce us to fear him; that is to ſay, as ſupremely good, and perfectly juſt. Theſe are his two principal attributes that engage us to ſerve him, and to obey his laws. III. The command God gave his people, to make no league with the *Canaanites*, is a warning to us of the danger of having any intercourſe with wicked men, and that we ought carefully to avoid it. IV. The laws about the firſt-born, the firſt-fruits, the ſabbath, and the feaſts, were in great wiſdom appointed to remind the *Iſraelites* of the chief favours God had beſtowed on them; and to prevent them from imitating the cuſtoms and ſuperſtitions of the idolatrous nations. V. It is ſomething very remarkable, that when the *Iſraelites* went to keep their ſolemn feaſts, God ſuffered not their enemies to invade their country; which was a very particular mark of the divine protection over this people, and a proof that God bleſſes thoſe who ſerve him, and defends them from the

dangers to which they might be expoſed by their obedience. Laſtly, The ſhining of *Moſes*'s face, when he came down from the mount, was an aſſurance to the people, that he ſpake to them from God; and this change in the perſon of *Moſes* is an emblem of that change which will be wrought in the faithful by the communication of the deity, and of the glory of the bleſſed, when they ſhall ſee God, and enjoy his preſence in heaven.

CHAP. XXXV.

THERE are two things to be conſidered in this chapter: I. The repetition of the law concerning the obſervation of the ſabbath. II. The offering made by all the people for the tabernacle.

REFLECTIONS.

I. *MOSES* frequently inculcates the law of the ſabbath, becauſe the obſervation of that day, which returned every week, put the *Iſraelites* in remembrance of the one only God, Creator of all things, and kept them at a diſtance from idolatry. II. We find in this chapter, that the people contributed with chearfulneſs and liberality towards the building of the tabernacle; ſome preſenting gold, ſilver, and precious ſtones; others offering fine linen, goats hair, and all materials for the work; every one on this occaſion expreſſing his zeal and readineſs. This example ſhould greatly animate Chriſtians to exert themſelves heartily in every thing that may contribute to the edification of the church, and the promoting true religion.

CHAP. XXXVI.

THE contributions for the building of the tabernacle being ended, the workmen who were appointed for this work, labour in it as God had commanded. We ſee likewiſe in this chapter, in what manner the tabernacle was ſet up.

CHAP. XXXVII.

A Deſcription of what was in the tabernacle, *viz.* of the ark of the covenant, of the table of ſhew-bread, of the candleſtick, and of the altar of incenſe.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

A Deſcription of what was without the tabernacle, *viz.* of the altar of burnt-offerings, of the laver of braſs, and of the outward court; together with a computation of the gold, ſilver, and braſs, which were uſed in the building of the tabernacle.

REFLECTIONS *on Chap.* XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII.

WHAT is ſet down in theſe chapters, being, except in ſome circumſtances, only a repetition of what was ſaid in the foregoing, it is natural to make the ſame reflections. The quantity of gold, ſilver, and braſs made uſe of for the tabernacle, and the ſum of money ariſing from the half ſhekel which every *Iſraelite* paid, ſhew, that they came out of *Egypt* with great riches, and that they freely and joyfully dedicated a part of them to the ſervice of God.

CHAP. XXXIX.

THIS chapter contains, I. A deſcription of the ſacred veſtments. II. The tabernacle being finiſhed, the workmen preſent it to *Moſes*.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT reflections are proper to be made upon the ſacred veſtments, may be ſeen in the xxviiith chapter of this book. What is particular in this chapter is, that when the tabernacle was finiſhed, the whole work was preſented to *Moſes*, who finding it, in all reſpects, ſuch as God had commanded, approved of it, and bleſſed thoſe who had laboured in the work, and the people who had ſupplied what was neceſſary to bring it to perfection. In all this we diſcover the peoples ready obedience, and *Moſes*'s faithful diſcharge of the truſt committed to him by God.

CHAP. XL.

I. THE work appointed for the tabernacle, and for the ſervice of God, being ended, God commands the tabernacle to be ſet up, and every thing placed in order. II. Which being finiſhed, God by the viſible tokens of his preſence, expreſſed his approbation of what was done; and ſignified his pleaſure to make his abode in that place, and to conduct the children of *Iſrael* in all their journies; and here ends the book of *Exodus*.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is of uſe to read this laſt chapter of *Exodus*, which informs us of the nature of the tabernacle, of its ſeveral parts, and their order. The tabernacle

cle was a kind of tent, which might be taken to pieces, and removed from one place to another. In this tabernacle was the moſt holy place, where was the ark of the covenant, with its ſtaves to ſupport it; and in this ark were kept the tables of the law. In this place were preſerved alſo the pot full of the manna which the children of *Iſrael* had eat in the wilderneſs; and *Aaron*'s rod which budded. Before the moſt holy place, which was incloſed with a veil, ſtood the altar of incenſe, with the table of the ſhew-bread, which was on the north ſide, and the golden candleſtick, which was on the ſouth ſide. On the outſide of this place, and near the door, ſtood the laver or brazen-ſea, the altar of burnt-offerings, on which the victims were burnt, and the court where the people aſſembled. When this tabernacle had been thus ſet in order, *Aaron* and the other prieſts, after they were conſecrated, began to perform divine ſervice in it. God gave marks of his preſence, by the cloud which alighted on the tabernacle, to convince the *Iſraelites*, that he would accept the ſervice they ſhould pay him in that place, and that he would be preſent in the midſt of them. Every time they were to remove from any place, the cloud aſcended from off the tabernacle; and when they were to ſtop, the cloud abode upon it. This tabernacle continued about five hundred years, being often removed from one place to another, till King *Solomon* built the temple of *Jeruſalem*. Upon the whole, let it be conſidered, I. That the tabernacle, with all that appertained to it, had been made by God's command, and according to the pattern which he had given to *Moſes*. II. That God, in his great wiſdom, had diſpoſed of what related to his ſervice in this manner, the better to ſuit himſelf to the condition of the *Iſraelites*, who were a rude and unrefined people. And laſtly, that all theſe things were figures and ſhadows of

what

what was to come to paſs in the times of the goſpel, when *Jeſus Chriſt* was to come to eſtabliſh a more perfect ſervice. This St. *Paul* teaches in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, where he ſays, that when the tabernacle was made, and all things belonging to it ſet in order, the prieſts went into it to perform the firſt ſervice; but that *Jeſus Chriſt*, the high-prieſt of good things to come, came with a more noble and perfect tabernacle, and purchaſed eternal redemption for us, and entered into heaven itſelf. Theſe reflections engage us to bleſs God for the advantages he has vouchſafed us, and to render him that ſervice which our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* has preſcribed, which conſiſts in worſhipping God in ſpirit and in truth.

The end of the ſecond book of MOSES, *called* EXODUS.

THE

THE THIRD BOOK of MOSES, CALLED LEVITICUS.

ARGUMENT.

The book of Leviticus *is so called, because it principally consists of rules and laws to be observed by the* Levites *and priests in the divine service. It contains, first, the laws concerning sacrifices and offerings; concerning the leprosy, and the several ceremonies which were to be observed by the Israelites. After this are set down several other laws relating to religious worship, and the conduct and behaviour of the Israelites. When we read these laws, we should remember that they were peculiar to the children of Israel; and that they were very wisely appointed, not only to instruct them in the principal duties of religion, but also to keep them at a distance from idolatry. Further, we are to consider, that since we have in Jesus Christ the substance of what was represented in the legal ceremonies, we are under an indispensible obligation to pay to God that spiritual worship and reasonable service required of us in the gospel.*

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter gives rules concerning the voluntary sacrifices, and whole burnt-offerings, or sacrifices in which the victims were wholly consumed by fire, which were of three kinds; either of

of great cattle, such as bulls and calves; or small cattle, as lambs and goats; or of birds, as turtle doves, and pigeons.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IT must be considered on this chapter, that besides the sacrifices which were required of necessity and indispensible obligation, there were others voluntary, which every one offered of his own free-will, and according to his abilities. However, the *Israelites* were not left to their liberty, to offer them just as they pleased, but were to do it in the manner God had directed. II. These voluntary sacrifices, as appears from this chapter, were very acceptable to God; who graciously receives whatever we do with a sincere heart. III. It is likewise to be observed that those who wanted ability to offer great or small cattle might offer pigeons. By which means the poor, as well as the rich, had it in their power to perform this religious duty. God receives no less graciously the offerings of the poor than of the rich, if they proceed from a good intention.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter treats of the meat-offerings and the first-fruits, which were to be presented to the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are chiefly concerned to observe on the laws relating to the meat-offerings and first-fruits, is, that a part of them was burnt in honour of God, and the rest belonged to the priests. By which means God was pleased not only to engage the *Israelites* to the discharge of a religious and so-

solemn act, acknowledging his bountiful hand the giver of all that the earth produced, but also to provide for the support of his ministers. Christians are not less obliged by the laws of Christ, to express their gratitude to God for his temporal blessings, and to provide for the necessary subsistance of their spiritual guides.

CHAP. III.

THIS chapter treats of the peace-offerings, which the *Israelites* offered in token of their gratitude to God, and to obtain his favour.

REFLECTIONS.

AS the design of the peace-offerings was to render, in a solemn manner, thanks and praise to God for the favours received from him, and to engage him to continue his blessings; we should learn from this chapter, when God vouchsafes any particular favour, our indispensible obligation to testify our gratitude to him; and since his kindness and love to us is the source of all our happiness, it should be our chief care to procure it.

CHAP. IV.

THIS chapter prescribes the manner of offering sacrifices for sins committed through ignorance, either by the high-priest, or by the people in general, or by any of the rulers, or by private persons.

REFLECTIONS.

THAT we may reap advantage from the reading of this chapter, we must make these four reflections. I. That since God had appointed sacrifices

fices to atone for ſins of ignorance, theſe ſins, tho' much leſs heinous than wilful and obſtinate ſins, ought carefully to be avoided; that to this end we ought to be well inſtructed in our duty, and have a ſtrict guard over our conduct; and that when we have happened to ſin through ignorance, and perceive our error, we ſhould be ſincerely grieved even for theſe ſins, and remedy them as much as in us lies. II. The ſecond reflection is, that thoſe in public character, ſuch as the prieſts and rulers of the people, were to make an atonement for their ſins, becauſe they were more grievous, and might bring the wrath of God, not only upon thoſe who had committed them, but upon the whole people. III. The third conſideration reſpects the ceremonies obſerved in theſe ſacrifices. Thoſe who offered them laid their hands on the head of the victims, to ſignify that they were ſacrificed in their ſtead; then the prieſt took the blood of the victims, and ſprinkled ſome of the blood before the veil of the ſanctuary, and put ſome upon the horns of the altar of incenſe, if the ſacrifice was offered for the prieſt or for all the people; the reſt of the blood was poured out at the foot of the altar of burnt offerings; the fat and the kidnies were burnt upon this altar, and the reſt of the body of the beaſt was burnt without the camp. Laſtly, We are to remember, that though theſe ceremonies had no virtue in themſelves to expiate ſins, yet God appointed them to teach the people of *Iſrael*, that when they had ſinned they were to confeſs their ſins before God, and apply to him for mercy; and that when they practiſed theſe rites in obedience to God's commands, he was appeaſed and forgave their miſdeeds.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

I. GOD commands that those shall be punished, who being bound by oath to speak the truth, do not do it. II. He then directs the manner of making atonement for those who had touched any unclean thing; for those who had made rash oaths and not kept them; and lastly, for those who had ignorantly withheld any thing that was dedicated to God, and broken any of his commandments.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE chapter we have just been reading, teaches us, in the first place, that it is a crime deserving the severest punishment, not to declare the truth when we are called upon by oath to do it; that we are obliged to perform our oaths, as far as lawfully we may, and to abstain from inconsiderate and rash oaths. II. The laws relating to sins committed through ignorance and inadvertence, and the obligation those who had fallen into them were under to confess and make atonement for them, shews it to be the will of God, that we should avoid, as much as possible, not only deliberate sins, but even those sins which we may rashly and inconsiderately fall into; since these last render us guilty before God, because we ought to take heed to our duty and our conduct. III. Since God here commands those who had fallen into sins of ignorance, to confess their sins, and to offer sacrifices; and if they were not in a condition to offer sheep, to offer young pigeons; or, if they were extremely poor, a little flour; we are to consider, that all manner of sins should be repaired and atoned for by confession and repentance; that no one can plead exemption from the obligation of remedying, to the utmost of his power, the evil he has committed. IV. It is to be remarked,

remarked, laſtly, that thoſe who had taken or withheld by miſtake any thing dedicated to God, were not only to offer a ſacrifice, but alſo to make reſtitution, and even to add to it a fifth part. Whence we learn our indiſpenſible obligation to reſtore whatever we are unlawfully poſſeſſed of, and that if thoſe who had withheld any ſacred thing ignorantly were bound to make reſtitution, even above the value of it; the duty of reſtitution muſt be ſtill more indiſpenſible, when we have taken and withheld, knowingly and wilfully, what does not belong to us.

CHAP. VI.

GOD commands, I. That thoſe who ſhould deny having in their hands any thing that had been committed to their truſt, or ſhould conceal any thing which they had found belonging to their neighbour, ſhould make reſtitution, and offer a ſacrifice to atone for their ſin. II. To this are added, laws concerning the burnt-offerings, and the fire which was to be continually burning on the altar to conſume them; concerning the meat-offerings which were in part to be offered to God, and the reſt to be eat by the prieſts; of the offering which was to be preſented by the prieſts, when they were appointed and conſecrated to their office; and laſtly, concerning the ſin-offerings, and the right the prieſts had to eat thereof.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is moſt deſerving of our attention in this chapter is, the law relating to thoſe who, having any thing depoſited in their hands ſhould diſown it, or ſhould withhold their neighbour's property by fraud or violence, or keep back any thing loſt. Such perſons were obliged by the law of God, not only to reſtore what they

they unjuſtly detained, but to give a fifth part over and above the value of the thing. This law ſhews, that what is committed to our truſt ſhould be eſteemed ſacred; that it is a great fault to diſown the truth, to attempt to withhold what was intruſted with us, and not to reſtore what we have gotten by fraud or violence; that any thing found ſhould be returned to the owners; that reſtitution is a duty indiſpenſible, and that thoſe who refuſe to ſubmit to this duty, cannot obtain forgiveneſs. As to the other laws, concerning burnt-offerings, the ſacrifices for ſin, and the meat-offerings, and thoſe wherein God determines what portion of the ſacrifices belonged to the prieſts; we may, with St. *Paul*, make this particular reflection, added to thoſe mentioned above; that ſince, by the law of God, the prieſts eat of the ſacrifices, the will of the Lord is, that the miniſters of the goſpel ſhould live by the goſpel.

CHAP. VII.

I. THIS chapter treats of the manner of offering the treſpaſs-offering, the thankſgiving-ſacrifices, and thoſe which were voluntary, or in conſequence of ſome vow. II. God forbids thoſe that were unclean to eat of the ſacrifices. III. He likewiſe prohibits the eating of the fat of the beaſts ſacrificed. IV. The uſe of blood is abſolutely forbidden; and the prieſts right to the peace-offerings regulated.

REFLECTIONS.

THE laws concerning the treſpaſs-offering, and the ſacrifices of thankſgiving, had a natural tendency to inform the *Jews*, that it was their duty to appeaſe the deity by repentance, when they had offended him, and to expreſs their gratitude for the mercies they received at his hands. The law con-

cerning vows, teaches us religiously to perform whatever we have vowed unto the Lord. If those who had contracted any legal uncleanness were not allowed to eat of the sacrifices, let us seriously consider how much less we ought to appear before God when polluted with sin. The *Israelites* were forbidden to eat the fat of bulls, and lambs, and goats, because the fat of those animals was burnt in their sacrifices in honour of the deity. The absolute prohibition of eating any blood, was the renewing of a law much more ancient, which God had given to *Noah* after the flood. We learn, lastly, from this chapter, in what manner God had provided for the priests, by assigning them a portion in the oblations and sacrifices of the children of *Israel*.

CHAP. VIII.

I. MOSES, having assembled all the people together, clothes *Aaron* and his sons with the sacred vestments. II. He anoints with the holy oil the tabernacle and all that was therein, and *Aaron*, and consecrateth the priests by a solemn sacrifice; observing all the ceremonies appointed by God, and set down in the twenty-ninth chapter of *Exodus*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE see here that *Moses* punctually performed all that God had commanded to be observed in his worship. God thought fit that all these religious ceremonies should be practised upon this solemn occasion, that the people might reverence the service to be performed in the tabernacle, and respect those appointed by God for the celebration of it; and also that the priests themselves, knowing to whom they were dedicated, might distinguish themselves from others by a stricter holiness.

CHAP. IX.

AARON, after his conſecration, offers ſacrifices for himſelf and for the people; which God graciouſly accepts, and in token of his acceptance appears in his glory, and ſends fire to conſume the ſacrifice.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to take particular notice in this chapter, that when *Aaron* entered upon his miniſtry, he offered ſacrifice for himſelf, as well as for the ſins of the people. The prieſts being ſinners had need to expiate their own ſins, before they made atonement for the ſins of others. This St. *Paul* mentions as a remarkable difference between the ancient prieſts and *Jeſus Chriſt*, when he ſays, "We have an high prieſt, who is holy, harmleſs, undefiled, ſeparate from ſinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not, as the high prieſts under the law, to offer ſacrifice firſt for his own ſins, and then for the people." The tokens God gave of his preſence before all the congregation, appearing in his glory, and cauſing fire to deſcend upon the ſacrifices, was ſufficient to convince the *Iſraelites* that the miniſtry of the prieſts, and the form of worſhip given them by *Moſes*, were perfectly agreeable to the divine will, and that if they ſerved him faithfully, they ſhould enjoy his preſence, and feel the effects of his favour.

CHAP. X.

I. NADAB and *Abihu*, the ſons of *Aaron*, having put ſtrange fire into their cenſers, to burn incenſe, inſtead of taking fire from the altar,

are deſtroyed ſuddenly by fire. II. *Moſes* forbids their father *Aaron* and their brethren to weep for them, or to go out of the tabernacle. III. He likewiſe forbids them to drink wine or any liquor that might intoxicate, when they were to miniſter in the holy places. IV. Upon this occaſion, the law concerning the prieſts portion in the oblations and ſacrifices is repeated; and *Aaron* and his ſons are reproved by *Moſes* for neglecting to obſerve this laſt law.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD ſlew *Nadab* and *Abihu*, the ſons of *Aaron*, to puniſh them for breaking the commandment of God, in putting fire into their cenſers which was not taken from the altar, to make them an example, and to inſpire both prieſts and people with dread; that no one might ever after preſume to make any alteration in the form of divine worſhip appointed by God himſelf. Whence we may learn, that men can have no right to ſerve God otherwiſe than he has commanded, and that he never lets thoſe go unpuniſhed who break his laws. The Lord forbad *Aaron* and his ſons, upon pain of death, to uſe any expreſſions of mourning on this occaſion, or even to depart from the tabernacle, ſince they could not have done it without diſgracing the holineſs of their character, and profaning the ſacred veſtments; and that they might teſtify, by this means, that they were more concerned for the honour of God, than for their own intereſt, and that they acquieſced in the juſt judgment of God upon *Nadab* and *Abihu*. At this time God forbad the prieſts to drink wine when they were to miniſter in the tabernacle. And the prohibition being made on this occaſion, gives room to conjecture, that *Nadab* and *Abihu* were diſordered with wine when they offered ſtrange fire; and that it was to prevent any thing of the like nature for the future, that this law

was

was given. It muſt therefore be conſidered as utterly unworthy of Chriſtians, and eſpecially of the miniſters of religion, to give way to exceſs of wine; and that as they are called by their moſt holy calling to ſerve God continually, they ought to live in great ſobriety and temperance.

CHAP. XI.

THIS chapter contains, I. The law concerning clean and unclean beaſts. II. The manner of purifying thoſe who were defiled by touching unclean beaſts.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this chapter it muſt be obſerved, that the diſtinction between clean beaſts and unclean, was very ancient, and not unknown even before the flood, but obſerved with regard to ſacrifices, as we find in the Book of *Geneſis*. God thought fit to give his people *Iſrael* more particular laws on this head, to diſtinguiſh them from the neighbouring nations, who did likewiſe make a diſtinction between animals, both in religion and the uſes of common life; but he appointed a diſtinction quite different from any obſerved by idolators: this he did, to put the *Iſraelites* in mind, as is obſerved in this chapter, that they were a holy people, dedicated to God, and diſtinguiſhed from other nations. Beſides this, theſe laws were given to prevent the *Jews* from falling into a brutiſh licentiouſneſs with regard to eating; to train them up to temperance and purity; to keep them in a dependance upon God, even in things relating to their food; and for reaſons of health too, with reſpect to ſome animals. And to render this law more inviolable, God declares all thoſe unclean, who did but barely touch the fleſh of theſe beaſts when dead.

The reasons of these laws having ceased, they regard not us; since the gospel teaches us that there is no creature, which is fit for food, which we may not eat, observing the rules of prudence and Christian temperance.

CHAP. XII.

THE law relating to women in childbed, and their purification.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS law, which forbad women to come into the sanctuary till a certain number of days after their delivery, and which required them to offer the sacrifice prescribed, was not only founded on reasons of decency and modesty, but was also designed to inspire them with a great reverence for holy places; and to prove the necessity of appearing before God with a pure heart. By this means women had likewise an opportunity given them of expressing their gratitude and thankfulness to their deliverer. The blessed Virgin *Mary* conformed to this law after the birth of *Jesus*, and when she presented him in the temple, we read in the gospel that she offered the offering here prescribed.

CHAP. XIII.

THIS chapter treats of the several kinds of leprosy, and how the priests were to judge of this disease.

CHAP. XIV.

GOD gives directions for the purification of lepers, and of houſes infected with the leproſy.

REFLECTIONS *on Chap.* xiii, xiv.

THE leproſy ſpoken of in theſe two chapters was a diſeaſe common in *Egypt*, whence the children of *Iſrael* came, and in the neighbouring countries; there was one kind which infected the very garments, and even the houſes. The laws God gave on this ſubject were partly political, appointed to prevent this contagious diſtemper from ſpreading among the people, and infecting them; and partly religious. The prieſts were judges in this diſeaſe, and the lepers could not be reputed clean till the prieſts had pronounced them ſo, and they had offered the ſacrifices and oblations preſcribed by the law; which our Lord obſerved when he had healed the leper, *Matth.* viii. 4. Thus theſe laws were deſigned to keep the *Jews* in ſtrict adherence to God and their religion, and prevent their having recourſe to unlawful means to get cured of ſo dreadful a diſtemper. Laſtly, They had likewiſe a moral uſe and meaning, as the other laws relating to legal uncleanneſs and purification had; which was to inſtruct the *Jews*, that the impure and unclean cannot pleaſe God. From theſe chapters, let us make the ſame concluſion, and conſider, that if the leproſy, which was an involuntary evil, and defiled not the ſoul, ſeparated thoſe who were infected with it from the intercourſe and ſociety of men; thoſe who live in ſin can never be reputed members of the church, nor have any communion with God, while they continue in ſuch a ſtate.

CHAP. XV.

LAWS concerning the uncleanneſſes of men and women, and the manner of their cleanſing.

REFLECTIONS.

IT was neceſſary God ſhould give theſe laws to the *Jews*, to teach them not only the external purity of the body, but alſo the internal purity of the ſoul, which conſiſts in chaſtity and continence, and avoiding every thing that may defile the body or ſoul before God.

CHAP. XVI.

THIS chapter contains the inſtitution of the ſacrifice offered on the day of atonement, which was the moſt ſolemn ſacrifice in the year. This feſtival was kept on the tenth day of the ſeventh month, which was a day of faſting, and of reſt for all the people. On that day, the high prieſt offered a ſacrifice for his own ſins and the ſins of the people; entered into the moſt holy place, and ſprinkled it with the blood of the victims; and when he came out, they brought the goat appointed by lot, and when the prieſt had confeſſed over it the ſins of the people, they ſent it into the wilderneſs: this was called the goat *hazazel*, or ſcape-goat. The intent of this ceremony was to ſignify, that the ſins of the *Iſraelites* were expiated and taken away, as if the goat had carried them away with him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE great day of atonement was appointed by God, to be kept once every year; that on that day the *Iſraelites* might humble themſelves before him,

him, by faſting and confeſſion of their ſins, and might obtain pardon and forgiveneſs. This was the deſign of the ſolemn ſacrifice offered to God, and of the high prieſt's entering into the moſt holy place. The uſe which Chriſtians are to make of all this, is expreſſed by St. *Paul* in his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, particularly in the ninth chapter. His reflections are theſe: I. That as the ſins of the *Jews* were expiated by the ſacrifice on the day of atonement, and by the entrance of the high prieſt into the moſt holy place, ſo *Jeſus Chriſt*, by the ſacrifice of himſelf, and by his aſcenſion into heaven, has fully atoned for our ſins, and procured us admiſſion to the joys of heaven. II. The apoſtle takes notice of ſeveral remarkable differences between the antient ſacrifices, and that of *Jeſus Chriſt*. 1. That the prieſts offered ſacrifices for their own ſins, becauſe they were ſinners; whereas Chriſt, being perfectly holy and ſeparate from ſinners, had no need to offer any ſacrifice for his own ſins. 2. That the prieſts entered into the holy place but once in the year, which ſhewed that the way into heaven was not yet opened; whereas *Jeſus Chriſt*, by his own ſacrifice, has opened to us the way to everlaſting life. 3. That theſe ancient ſacrifices were repeated every year, which was a proof of their weakneſs and inſufficiency; whereas the ſacrifice of our Lord was to be but once offered. St. *Paul* further obſerves, that the high prieſt entered into the ſanctuary with the blood of the victims; but that Chriſt entered into heaven with his own blood. Laſtly, This apoſtle affirms, that the blood of beaſts could not of itſelf ſanctify men, nor reconcile them with God; while the blood of Chriſt is efficacious to the expiation of our ſins, purging our conſciences. All theſe conſiderations ſhould fill us with a juſt ſenſe of the advantages we enjoy, and the neceſſity we are under of making a right uſe and improve-

improvement of them by faith and repentance; without which, this great ſacrifice of our Saviour will ſtand us in no ſtead. It appears, moreover, from this law, which enjoined the *Jews* to faſt on the day of atonement, that it is a duty moſt acceptable to God, to humble ourſelves before him by ſolemn faſts, and even to have ſeaſons ſet apart for that purpoſe.

CHAP. XVII.

IN this chapter God forbids the offering of ſacrifices any where but at the door of the tabernacle, or to any other but to him. II. He forbids the eating of ſuch beaſts as died of themſelves, or had been torn in pieces by wild beaſts.

REFLECTIONS.

THE charge given to the *Jews* not to offer ſacrifice any where, except in the place which God had choſen, and in the preſence of the prieſts, was deſigned to preſerve among the *Iſraelites* the purity and uniformity of divine worſhip, and prevent them from introducing a falſe worſhip, and falling into idolatry. And the care taken by God himſelf to prevent this, proves, that religion ought to be preſerved in its purity, and that we ſhould never turn aſide from the rules preſcribed in God's word. The eating of blood, and of beaſts that died of themſelves, was forbidden, in order to keep the *Jews* at a diſtance from murder, cruelty, and the barbarous cuſtoms of the idolatrous nations; as well as from the cuſtom they had of eating blood in their worſhip of the falſe gods. It appears likewiſe from this chapter, that the life of blood was forbidden by God, becauſe the blood was ſhed to make an atonement for the ſins of men, and therefore ought to be looked upon as a thing

offered

offered to God, and devoted to a religious uſe, which ſhews, that this law was appointed with great wiſdom. What we are to conſider upon this head is, that the law of Chriſt, being a law of love and charity, is ſtill more inconſiſtent with inhumanity and ſhedding of blood than the law of *Moſes*; and therefore, that we ought to abhor theſe crimes, and every thing that tends towards them.

CHAP. XVIII.

I. GOD forbids the *Iſraelites* to imitate the crimes of the *Egyptians* and *Canaanites*, and particularly their impurities and inceſtuous marriages. II. He declares, that it was on account of theſe ſins that the *Canaanites* were going to be deſtroyed, and that if the *Iſraelites* imitated them, they too ſhould be deſtroyed.

REFLECTIONS.

THE chief thing we are to take notice of in this chapter is, that the ſins of uncleanneſs had drawn the *Canaanites* into the moſt horrid crimes, ſince God was obliged to give theſe laws concerning inceſtuous marriages, and other abominations, to prevent the *Jews* from falling into the ſame diſorders, in imitation of theſe abominable nations. So that the reading of this chapter ſhould inſpire us with the utmoſt abhorrence of all uncleanneſs, ſo as to avoid all that is contrary, not only to the law of *Moſes*, which is but a ſmall thing for Chriſtians; but likewiſe to thoſe of the goſpel, which ſo expreſsly command purity and chaſtity. Obſerve likewiſe, and with great attention, that God expreſsly declares, that the land wherein the *Canaanites* dwelt could no longer bear them, by reaſon of their grievous ſins; that he was going to root them out; and that if the

Israelites should fall into the like abominations, they too should feel the divine vengeance. This suffers us not to doubt one moment but God abhors uncleanness, and that the sins committed by the inhabitants of any country, do defile that country, and bring down upon it the curse of God when they become frequent, when they go unpunished, and nothing is done to hinder them.

CHAP. XIX. 1—18.

I. THE laws contained in this chapter relate to the observation of the sabbath and other holy-days, to idolatry, and to sacrifices. II. God forbids the *Jews* to glean their fields and their vineyards; to steal; to swear falsly; to withhold the wages of labourers; to hurt the deaf or the blind; to give wrong judgment; to slander and hate their neighbour.

REFLECTIONS.

ALL these laws are of the greatest importance, and most of them regard Christians as well as they did the *Jews*. The duties here enjoined are such as these; to honour father and mother; to respect religion; to serve God with a free heart; and, in conformity to his holy word, to be charitable to the poor, and not to be covetous, particularly in time of harvest and vintage, and gathering of fruits. We are likewise taught here, that it is a great sin before God to injure our neighbour, to take a false oath, to withhold the labourers wages, and to deride those who have any bodily defects, as the deaf and blind; or to do them any harm; and to have respect to persons in the execution of justice or judgment, either by favouring the poor and needy, or by paying a deference to the rich and great. Lastly, We here learn

to

to abſtain from ſlander, hatred and revenge; to rebuke our neighbour when he ſins, and love him as ourſelves. All theſe things are ſtill more ſtrictly commanded by the law of *Jeſus Chriſt*, than they were by the law of *Moſes*; ſo that they are to Chriſtians ſtill more ſacred and inviolable.

CHAP. XIX. 19——37.

I. GOD forbids the mixing of things of ſeveral kinds; orders the unclean to be puniſhed; forbids the eating the firſt fruits of the trees, conſulting with ſorcerers, ſhaving their beards, and cutting their bodies in mourning, after the manner of idolators, and imitating their impurities. II. God commands them to honour the aged; to love ſtrangers; and to have juſt weights and meaſures.

REFLECTIONS.

MOST of theſe laws were given to the *Jews*, to keep them from following the ſuperſtitious cuſtoms and practices of idolators. God forbad the mixture of divers kinds, to keep the *Jews* from all criminal commerce, as well as from ſuperſtition and idolatry. He would not ſuffer them to eat of the fruit which the trees bore the firſt three years, becauſe they might not eat of the fruit of any tree before they had offered the firſt fruits to God; and becauſe, before the fourth year, the fruits were generally but of little value, and therefore could not be preſented to the Lord, who had commanded the beſt of every kind to be offered to him. This law was alſo oppoſed to the cuſtoms of the idolators; and tended to teach them, that whatever the earth produced was owing to his bounty. The other laws teach us, that it is extremely wicked to conſult ſorcerers; that we ought not to afflict ourſelves to exceſs for the dead; that impurity

impurity is a ſin, and that it ought to be puniſhed; that we ſhould reſpect old age, do juſtice to ſtrangers, and uſe true weights and meaſures. Theſe are duties of piety, purity and juſtice, which concern all men without exception; but which Chriſtians are much more obliged to obſerve than the *Jews*.

CHAP. XX.

GOD commands them to put to death thoſe who cauſed their children to paſs through the fire, in honour of *Moloch*, the idol of the *Ammonites*; thoſe who make application to vizards, and the vizards themſelves; thoſe that curſed father or mother, adulterers, inceſtuous perſons, and ſuch as fell into other enormous impurities. Laſtly, *Moſes* exhorts the *Iſraelites* to be holy, to keep the laws of God, and to avoid the cuſtoms and manners of the *Canaanites*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE conſiderations which theſe laws ſuggeſt to us, are as follow: the prohibition of burning children, and offering them to the idol *Moloch*, ſhews us what horrible and exceſſive cruelties the idolatrous people fell into in the ſervice of their falſe gods; and what men who know not the true God are capable of. Obſerve next, that the law of God very expreſsly condemns divination and magick, as things not only vain, but highly criminal; and that thoſe who applied themſelves to ſorcerers, and the ſorcerers themſelves, were to be puniſhed with death: As there is none but God who knows things future and ſecret, it is the laſt degree of impiety to apply to diviners, and give credit to them. It was likewiſe the command of God that thoſe that curſed father or mother, as well as adulterers, and thoſe who defiled themſelves with abominable

nable impurities, ſhould be put to death, both men and women. From whence we may judge how abominable thoſe crimes are, and how ſeverely God will puniſh in the other world thoſe Chriſtians who have given themſelves up to them. Laſtly, The repeated exhortations of God to the *Jews*, not to imitate the *Canaanites* in their lewdneſs, and to be to him a holy people, ought to put us Chriſtians in mind, that God having ſeparated us from the world, *we ſhould not be conformed to this preſent world; but as he who hai called us is holy, we ought alſo to be holy in all manner of converſation; becauſe it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.* In this manner does the Apoſtle St. *Peter* apply to Chriſtians the exhortation contained in this chapter.

CHAP. XXI.

I. THE laws contained in this chapter relate to the purity of the prieſts; their manner of mourning, and their marriages. II. God commands that the daughters of prieſts ſhould be put to death, if they fell into uncleanneſs; and he forbids the receiving any perſon with any bodily blemiſh or defect into the ſervice of the tabernacle.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD would not ſuffer the prieſts to defile themſelves for the dead; that is, to aſſiſt at the burial of the dead, nor to put on the appearance of mourning, except for the death of thoſe who were very nearly related to them. The reaſon of this prohibition was, that this would have rendered them unclean in the eye of the law, and incapable of attending in the tabernacle, and performing divine ſervice. This law, and the other laws contained in this chapter, were given chiefly on theſe two accounts: I. The

better

better to restrain the people, and the priests themselves, from idolatry, and the customs of idolators; and to prevent, in the persons or families of the priests, the same disorders that were to be seen among the priests of false religions. II. That the holiness of the priests might render religion itself more venerable; and their good example might teach the rest of the *Israelites* to be holy also. The law that excluded from the service of the tabernacle such as had any blemish in their bodies, tended also to the honour of religion; it was likewise founded upon this reason, that such persons were not proper for the functions then performed by the priests, which required a body strong, and fitly disposed to perform them. The reflections we are to make on this, with regard to the Christian church is, that the pastors and ministers of religion should be distinguished by a holy exemplary life, and especially by their great purity; and, in particular, that their families should be well regulated: in a word, that they should suffer nothing that may expose religion to contempt.

CHAP. XXII.

THE laws here prescribed, respect, I. The purity required of the priests before they might eat of the holy things. II. They direct what persons of the priests family were permitted and forbidden to eat thereof. III. What beasts were to be offered in sacrifices, with their qualities, age, and other circumstances.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we see that God required of his priests great purity, since those who had contracted any legal uncleanness, were not only disqualified for the time to perform any of their functions, but

but even to eat of the holy things appointed for their ſupport, as the fleſh of the ſacrifices, and the offerings of the people. Whereby God was pleaſed to teach them, and all the *Jews*, to reverence every thing relating to his ſervice. For the ſame reaſon, all who were not of the prieſt's houſhold, were forbidden to eat of what was ſet apart for the nouriſhment of the prieſts and their families. Laſtly, God commanded the *Iſraelites* to offer him nothing but the beſt of every kind; and the beaſts which had any blemiſh were rejected, becauſe thoſe who preſented them did it out of a principle of covetouſneſs, and for want of reſpect to the divinity. Whatever we do to the honour of God, ſhould be done with pleaſure and with a free will, and in the moſt perfect manner we are able.

CHAP. XXIII.

I. GOD preſcribes the obſervation of the ſabbath, of the paſſover, of the feaſt of the firſt-fruits, and that of pentecoſt. II. He then commands them to keep the feaſt of trumpets, the day of atonement, and the feaſt of tabernacles.

REFLECTIONS.

IT has been ſeveral times obſerved, that God had eſtabliſhed the obſervation of the ſabbath among the *Jews*, in memory of the creation of the world. The deſign of the paſſover was to preſerve the remembrance of their deliverance out of *Egypt*; and the offering which was made at that time of the firſt-fruits, was a ſolemn homage and acknowledgment that the *Jews* made to God, for the fruits which the land of *Canaan* produced. The pentecoſt was a feaſt of thankſgiving, celebrated by the *Jews* after harveſt, as a mark of their gratitude to God;

it was likewiſe deſigned to put them in mind of the promulgation of the law, upon the fiftieth day after they came out from *Egypt*. The three other feaſts, *viz.* the feaſt of trumpets, the day of atonement, and the feaſt of tabernacles, were kept in the ſame month. The feaſt of trumpets fell on the firſt day of the month, and was ſo named, becauſe that day, which was the firſt in the civil year, was uſhered in with the ſound of trumpets. The day of atonement was kept on the tenth day of the ſame month; on which day the *Jews* faſted, and offered a ſolemn ſacrifice to God, as is mentioned in the ſixteenth chapter of this book. The feaſt of tabernacles began on the fifteenth day of the ſame month, and laſted eight days. During which time the *Jews* dwelt in tents made with branches of trees, in memory of their fathers dwelling in tents in the wilderneſs, after they came out of *Egypt*. We no longer celebrate thoſe feaſts, as the *Jews* did, nor for the ſame reaſons; but the Chriſtian church obſerves *Sunday*, which was the day of our Lord's reſurrection, and of the creation of the world: we likewiſe keep the feaſts of *Chriſtmas*, *Eaſter*, and *Whitſuntide*, in remembrance of the great events which happened at thoſe times. Chriſtians may ſtill ſet apart days for faſting and humiliation, or to praiſe God for his mercies. The ſpirit and deſign of theſe laws is in general this, that we ſhould never forget the mercies of the Lord, and eſpecially his moſt ſignal favours; above all, the bleſſing of our redemption.

CHAP. XXIV.

IN this chapter we read, I. The law concerning the oil that was to be burnt in the ſanctuary. II. That concerning the ſhew-bread. III. The hiſtory of the blaſphemer that was ſtoned. IV. The puniſh-

ment

ment of murderers, and of those that kill the cattle of other people, or any way injure their neighbour.

REFLECTIONS.

THE law concerning the oil for the lamps, which were to burn in the sanctuary, was appointed, that that holy place might be always illuminated. The shew-bread, which was placed on the table in the sanctuary, was a solemn acknowledgment, whereby the *Israelites* testified their dependence upon God, for all the good things which the land of *Canaan* produced. The loaves were twelve in number, according to the number of the twelve tribes of *Israel*; and, when they were taken away, they were for the priests to eat. This law should teach Christians to be grateful for the blessings that God bestows on them. The history of the blasphemer, who was stoned, and the command of God to put blasphemers to death, is very remarkable, and ought to inspire us with an extreme horror for blasphemy and impiety. Lastly, The command given by God to put murderers to death, and to punish others that use their neighbour ill, or do him any injury, shews, that those that commit these sins ought to be punished by the magistrate; that violence, injustice, wrath, and revenge, are forbidden, and consequently ought to be avoided, not only for fear of the punishment to be inflicted by the judges, but out of respect to the divine laws, and because these sins are intirely opposite to justice and charity.

CHAP. XXV.

GOD commands, I. That they let the land rest every seventh year. II. That they keep a year of jubilee every fiftieth year; upon which occasion

caſion he regulates the manner of buying lands, houſes, and ſlaves.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflection we are to make on the ſabbatical year, is, that as the *Jews* reſted the ſeventh day of every week, in remembrance of God's creating the world in ſix days, and reſting the ſeventh day, they were, for the ſame reaſon, commanded to let the land reſt every ſeventh year. Whereby the *Jews* acknowledged, that the fruitfulneſs of the country proceeded only from God; which they had a miraculous proof of in the earth's yielding, the ſixth year, the produce of three years. As for the year of jubilee, which returned at the end of forty-nine years; in this year all eſtates that had been ſold returned to their former poſſeſſors; ſo that no eſtate could be ſold for ever, except houſes in cities, and which did not belong to the *Levites*. *Hebrew* ſlaves were likewiſe ſent away free. And to ſecure the obſervance of this law, God appointed that the value of eſtates ſhould be greater or leſs, in proportion as the year of jubilee was nearer or farther off. The deſign of this law, as is obſerved in this chapter, was to teach the *Iſraelites*, and their poſterity, that the land of *Canaan* belonged to God, who had given it to their fathers; to preſerve the diſtinction of tribes and inheritances; to provide for the wants of the poor; and to prevent the rich from depriving the poor of their goods and liberty, by purchaſing lands and ſlaves for ever. In all this we diſcover the great wiſdom of God, and the admirable manner of his governing the people of *Iſrael*. Moreover, the laws contained in this chapter, put us in mind, that all the good things we enjoy come from God; that it is a great ſin to oppreſs the poor, and to lend money to the neceſſitous upon hard and unjuſt terms; that the

the poor and ſtrangers are to be treated with equity and humanity; and that we ought to be diſintereſted and charitable in all our conduct. It appears likewiſe from this chapter, that in buying and ſelling due regard ſhould be had to the value of things, and a juſt proportion be obſerved. Laſtly, Let it be conſidered, that if God would not have the *Jews* ſubject thoſe of their own nation to ſlavery, becauſe they were all equally the Lord's ſervants and free men; Chriſtian maſters are ſtill more engaged to be juſt and mild towards their ſervants, who are the redeemed of *Jeſus Chriſt*, as well as they; remembring, *that their ſervants, and they themſelves too, have a maſter in heaven; and that with him there is no reſpect of perſons.*

CHAP. XXVI.

I. MOSES exhorts the *Jews* to ſhun idolatry, and to obſerve the ſabbath. II. He ſets before them the bleſſings they would receive from God, if they obeyed his commandments. III. He denounces the curſes that would fall upon them, if they did not obey them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt obſervation we are to make here is, that though the temporal bleſſings that God promiſed the children of *Iſrael*, if they would keep his laws, do not belong to Chriſtians; it nevertheleſs appears from hence, that the happineſs of men depends upon the obſervation of God's commands, who always beſtows his favours upon thoſe that fear him; and that godlineſs has the promiſe of the preſent life, as well as of the life to come. The curſes

contained in this chapter, next demand our moſt ſerious attention. In them we clearly ſee all that afterwards happened to the people of *Iſrael*, by reaſon of their ſins; how God viſited them upon divers occaſions, by famine, by peſtilence, by war, and other ſcourges; and how, at laſt, he delivered them to their enemies, and drove them out of the land of *Canaan*; particularly when they were carried away captive into *Aſſyria* and *Babylon*, and at laſt deſtroyed by the *Romans*. God promiſed, however, to reſtore the *Jews*, after he had afflicted them. This reſtoration partly happened when they returned from their captivity; but it will be more perfectly accompliſhed in the laſt days, when that nation ſhall be converted. Theſe are noble and convincing evidences of the divine authority of the ſcriptures; the hiſtory of the *Jewiſh* nation exactly confirming the truth of all theſe predictions, which have been made above three thouſand years. This ſhould inſtruct Chriſtians to dread the curſes denounced in the goſpel againſt impenitent ſinners; eſpecially ſince thoſe curſes are infinitely more terrible than thoſe contained in this chapter.

CHAP. XXVII.

I. THIS chapter treats of redeeming perſons, and other things that had been devoted to God by a vow. II. The Lord there commands the punctual and faithful payments of the tithes, both of the fruits of the earth and of beaſts.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter gives us the following inſtruction; that vows ought to be religiouſly obſerved; and that when a thing has been devoted to God, and to holy uſes, it cannot be applied to any other, without

out the guilt of ſacrilege. The exactneſs to be obſerved in paying of tithes, both of the fruits of the earth, and of beaſts; and the charge not to pay the tithe with that which was leaſt in ſize or value, ſhews, that it is ſacrilege to uſe any fraud or deceit in that which is ſet apart for divine ſervice, or other religious uſes; but that we ought to give with pleaſure, even the beſt and moſt precious of our ſubſtance.

The end of the third Book of MOSES, *called* Leviticus.

THE

THE FOURTH BOOK of MOSES, CALLED NUMBERS.

ARGUMENT.

The Book of Numbers *has its name from the numbering of the children of* Israel, *which is the buſineſs of the former chapters of this Book. It begins in the ſecond month of the ſecond year after their departure out of* Egypt, *and ends in the eleventh month of the fortieth year, taking in the ſpace of thirty-nine years. This Book contains likewiſe ſeveral laws which God gave to the* Iſraelites; *and an account of ſeveral remarkable events, while they were in the wilderneſs.*

CHAP. I.

IN the firſt chapter of this book we find *Moſes* and *Aaron*, after they were come out of *Egypt*, taking the number of all the children of *Iſrael*, which was ſix hundred thouſand men.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE principal reflection to be made on the numbering of the children of *Iſrael*, is, as *Moſes* obſerved to them a little before his death, the prodigious increaſe of the poſterity of *Jacob*. They were, when they went down into *Egypt*, but threeſcore

ſcore and ten perſons; and when they came out, which was about two hundred and ten years after, they were no leſs than ſix hundred thouſand, without taking into the account thoſe that were under twenty years old, or the women, or thoſe who were not able to go out to war, or the *Levites*. Thus did God fulfil his promiſe made to *Abraham*, of giving him a numerous poſterity, as many as the ſtars of heaven for multitude, or as the ſand upon the ſea-ſhore. This too heightens and confirms the miracle of ſupporting ſo great a multitude in the wilderneſs for forty years; which would have been abſolutely impoſſible, if God had not miraculouſly provided for them, by the manna he ſent for their food during that ſpace. The *Levites* were not numbered with the reſt of the *Iſraelites*, becauſe they were not obliged to go out to war; and becauſe they were wholly taken up in the ſervice of the tabernacle.

CHAP. II.

WE ſee in this chapter the diſpoſition of the camp of *Iſrael*, and the order of their marches.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE beautiful order in which the tribes of *Iſrael* were diſpoſed when they were encamped, and when they were on their march, is worth notice, each having its proper poſt and rank aſſigned. This was neceſſary to prevent confuſion, which otherwiſe muſt have been inevitable in ſo great a multitude. II. God ordered the twelve tribes to be encamped and ranged, at a certain diſtance round about the tabernacle; by which means that holy place was in the midſt of the camp, and ſecure from danger. The *Iſraelites* might too from hence be convinced, that the

the privilege of having God and his ſervice in the midſt of them, was the foundation of all their happineſs. What therefore God commanded, in this reſpect, was worthy of the divine wiſdom, and tended equally to maintain order among the people, and keep them attached to God and religion.

CHAP. III, and IV.

MOSES ſets down in theſe two chapters the genealogy of the prieſts; the choice God made of the *Levites*, who were joined to them; and the ſeveral offices and functions of the *Levites*, with regard to the tabernacle, when it was to be removed from one place to another.

REFLECTIONS *on chap.* iii, *and* iv.

GOD had made among the *Levites*, as he had done among the other tribes, proper regulations. The three principal families of the tribe of *Levi* had each its peculiar office; which God thought fit ſo to regulate in order to preſerve purity and uniformity, and to prevent change and confuſion in the divine worſhip. The *Levites* were choſen in the ſtead of the firſt-born of all the people, which were the Lord's; and as the number of the firſt-born was greater than of the *Levites*, they were to redeem the overplus, by paying for each of them five ſhekels. This was intended by God to preſerve the remembrance of the difference he had made between his own people and the *Egyptians*, when he deſtroyed all the firſt-born of *Egypt*, and ſaved the firſt-born of *Iſrael*. By this ceremony the *Iſraelites* were to acknowledge themſelves to be the Lord's, and their indiſpenſible obligation to dedicate themſelves to his ſervice.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

IN this chapter God commands three things: I. That all thoſe perſons who were defiled ſhould be turned out of the camp. II. That thoſe who had wronged any one, ſhould make reſtitution. III. That women ſuſpected of adultery, ſhould be tried by the waters of jealouſy.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE are three things to be obſerved: I. That God commanded all unclean perſons to be put out of the camp, to ſhew the *Iſraelites* that he expected of them very great purity; from whence Chriſtians ſhould infer, that the church of Chriſt ſhould be pure, and no ſcandalous ſinners ſuffered to remain in its communion, and that every one ſhould ſhun and avoid them. II. This chapter teaches us, that thoſe who have wronged another, in any manner whatever, are obliged to make an exact and compleat reſtitution; and that if the perſons to whom ſuch reſtitution is to be made cannot be found, it ſhould be devoted and dedicated to the Lord. The frequent repetition of this law of reſtitution ſhews the indiſpenſible nature of this duty. III. The law relating to the waters of jealouſy ſhould convince us of the greatneſs of the ſin of adultery; and we ought to conſider, that if God does not diſcover and puniſh ſins of uncleanneſs, after the ſame manner that he did among the *Jews*, for particular reaſons taken from the condition of that people; theſe ſins are not hid from him, and he will bring them to light at the day of judgment, and puniſh them moſt ſeverely in the life to come.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. The law relating to *Nazarites*. The perſons ſo called had devoted themſelves to God in a particular manner, and by ſolemn vows, either for a time or for their whole lives. God here determines what they were obliged by this vow to obſerve. II. *Moſes* ſets down at the end of the chapter the form in which the prieſts were to bleſs the people.

REFLECTIONS.

THE vow of the *Nazarites*, and part of the ceremonies which they obſerved, were of very ancient uſe, even among other nations. God commands thoſe who entered into this vow, to do it to his honour; and appoints what ceremonies were to be practiſed either in fulfilling of the vow, or in order to be freed from the obligation of it. This law is no longer obſerved. However, Chriſtians may take occaſion from hence to remember, that they are ſeparated from the world, and conſecrated to God after a more expreſs and more holy manner, and by vows more ſolemn and more irreverſible than the *Nazarites* themſelves were formerly; and that theſe vows particularly bind them to live in temperance and great ſobriety, and to diſtinguiſh themſelves from other men by pure and exemplary lives. The bleſſing which the prieſts pronounced over the people of *Iſrael*, is ſtill in uſe in the Chriſtian church. It is an excellent form of prayer, teaching us that the favour and bleſſing of God is the fountain of all our happineſs; that we ought inceſſantly to implore that bleſſing, as well for ourſelves as others; and that the miniſters of the Lord, eſpecially, ought to pour out their conſtant prayers for the people they are ſet over.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter ſpecifies the ſeveral offerings made by the heads of the tribes of *Iſrael*, at the ſetting up of the tabernacle, and the dedication of the altar.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are informed in this chapter, that beſides the offerings made by the children of *Iſrael*, with ſo much chearfulneſs and liberality towards the building of the tabernacle, the heads of the tribes gave a remarkable inſtance of their zeal, in offering a great quantity of veſſels of gold and ſilver, as well as beaſts for the ſacrifices, when the tabernacle was finiſhed and the altar dedicated. The evangelical worſhip requires not oblations of this nature, nor ſuch large expences; but Chriſtians are bound to dedicate their ſubſtance with great zeal, to advance the cauſe of piety and religion, and to relieve thoſe who are in neceſſity and expoſed to ſufferings.

CHAP. VIII.

THIS chapter contains, I. The command concerning lighting the lamps in the tabernacle. II. The ceremonies obſerved in the conſecration of the *Levites*, who were choſen by God inſtead of the firſt-born of the children of *Iſrael*, and were to ſerve in the tabernacle under the prieſts. III. At what age the *Levites* were to enter upon their office, and at what age they were to leave off ſerving in the tabernacle.

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REFLECTIONS.

THE deſign of theſe laws was to regulate the ſervice of the tabernacle, and every thing relating to the worſhip of God, in ſuch a manner, that all things might be performed with decency, and agreeable to the divine will. In the conſecration of the *Levites*, there are chiefly theſe three ceremonies remarkable; I. That they were conſecrated by waſhings and purifications, that it might appear their office was very holy. II. That they were preſented to God by the chief of the people, who laid their hands upon the head of the *Levites*, to ſignify that they were appointed inſtead of the firſt-born of all the people, whom God ſaved alive when he deſtroyed the firſt-born of the *Egyptians*. And laſtly, that the *Levites* preſented victims, which were ſacrificed, after they had laid their hands upon their heads; by which ceremony they acknowledged themſelves likewiſe to be ſinners, and that their ſins muſt be expiated, in order to be ſet apart for the ſervice of God. The age of the *Levites*, who were admitted to miniſter before the Lord, was from five and twenty to fifty years old, becauſe their functions required ſtrength and vigour. What we are to infer from this chapter with reſpect to the Chriſtian church, is, that ſince the office of paſtors and miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt* is ſpiritual, and much more holy than that of the *Levites*, it requires great purity and peculiar gifts; and that none ſhould be admitted to this office but ſuch as are in a condition worthily to diſcharge it.

CHAP. IX.

I. THE *Iſraelites* keep the paſſover in the wilderneſs, the year after they came out of *Egypt*; and as there were ſome among them, who, by reaſon of ſome

ſome uncleanneſs, could not celebrate it at that time, God gave commandment that thoſe who could not obſerve it at the uſual time, ſhould do it the following month. II. We here ſee how God led the people in the wilderneſs by the cloud, which was a token of his preſence.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this chapter we may make theſe four reflections: I. That as the *Jews* kept the paſſover, in the manner that God had appointed, we alſo ſhould inviolably obſerve all the divine ordinances, and particularly thoſe that relate to the ſervice of God. II. That if thoſe who were only outwardly defiled, were not allowed to keep the paſſover, thoſe who have defiled themſelves with ſin, are much leſs fit to preſent themſelves before God, and eſpecially to partake of the Lord's ſupper. III. It is to be obſerved, that thoſe who could not keep the paſſover at the ſet time, by reaſon of ſome legal uncleanneſs, were ordered by God to do it the following month, after they had purified themſelves. This ſhews, that all the divine inſtitutions are to be exactly obſerved; that we may not diſpenſe even with the external duties of religion, when God has expreſsly required them; and that if we are not fitly diſpoſed for the diſcharge of them, it is our duty immediately to endeavour to attain the neceſſary diſpoſitions, purifying ourſelves by repentance. Laſtly, That if it was a glorious advantage to the *Jews*, to be led by the cloud in the wilderneſs, which was to them a ſymbol of the divine preſence; we have in *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord a much more expreſs pledge of his preſence and favour, and are much more happy in being guided by the light of the goſpel, which ſhews us the way wherein we are to walk during our ſtay in this world, in order to arrive at the joys of heaven.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter consists of three parts. I. The command God gave about making the silver trumpets, which were to call the people together when they were to go to war, and on their feast-days. II. The order in which the people of *Israel* journeyed from the wilderness of *Sinai* to go to *Paran*, with the ark of the covenant before them. III. That *Hobab*, brother in law to *Moses*, who had accompanied them to that place, was going to leave them, but *Moses* entreated him to stay with them. *Moses* also sets down the words which were pronounced when the ark set forward, and when it stopt, in the several encampments of the people.

REFLECTIONS.

THE rules for calling of the people of *Israel* together, were given to prevent disorder in their assemblies, in their marches, and in their feasts; and above all, to lead them to acknowledge their absolute dependence upon God, who was their protector and guide. This is the reason why the ark of the covenant was carried before them, and why *Moses* made use of the words mentioned in this chapter, when the ark set forward, and when it stopt. We ought likewise to acknowledge it our glory and our security, to have God present with us, and to live under his care and protection; that we can expect happiness from him alone, by following the guidance of his holy word, and living always as in his sight. *Moses* desired *Hobab*, his brother in law, the son of *Raguel*, otherwise named *Jethro*, who had accompanied him for some time, not to leave them; promising to do him good when they were come into the land of *Canaan*. The company of prudent and godly men

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is a bleſſing, which we cannot ſeek for or preſerve with too much care; and therefore we ought to endeavour to keep up a ſtrict union with them; and be ready with pleaſure to impart to them the advantages which God beſtows on us.

CHAP. XI.

MOSES gives an account of two murmurings of the children of *Iſrael*: firſt, when they complained of the fatigue of their journey; for which God conſumed ſome of them by fire; the ſecond, when they aſked fleſh; which ſo afflicted *Moſes*, that he deſired God to eaſe him of the burthen of that people; but God ordered him to take unto him ſeventy men, that he might impart of his ſpirit unto them. After this he ſent quails for the people; but, to puniſh their murmurings and luſtings, he deſtroyed a great number of them.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Paul* teaches us the uſe we ought to make of this hiſtory, when he tells us, that theſe things are examples for us, to the intent that *we ſhould not luſt after evil things, as the children of Iſrael alſo luſted*. To this general reflection we muſt add theſe four particular ones: I. Their longing after the proviſions of *Egypt*, and their diſtaſte for manna, is a warning to us not to deſpiſe the favours which God has beſtowed upon us, nor prefer earthly things before heavenly. II. *Moſes* hearing the murmuring of the *Iſraelites*, was ſo grieved at it, that he begged of God to diſcharge him from his office; but God, to comfort him, put his ſpirit upon ſeventy men, whom he appointed to aſſiſt *Moſes* in his office; and beſides that, promiſed to manifeſt his power in giving the children of *Iſrael* fleſh to eat. The ſervants

of God may be diſcouraged, when they meet with contradiction, and men rebel againſt God; but it is a trial which they ought to overcome; and God, in his great goodneſs, always proportions his aſſiſtance to their neceſſities. III. The anſwer of *Moſes*, when they told him that *Eldad* and *Medad* did propheſy in the camp; and his wiſh, that all the Lord's people were prophets, teach us not to envy the bleſſings that God beſtows upon others; but, on the contrary, to rejoice as often as we ſee the glory of God promoted, either by ourſelves or our neighbours. Laſtly, Let it be obſerved, that God, to ſtop the murmurings of the people, who aſked fleſh, ſent them quails in great abundance; but that after they had eat of them, God deſtroyed a great number of the murmurers. God ſometimes, in wrath, grants men their petitions; and the accompliſhment of their wiſhes is often the means of their puniſhment.

CHAP. XII.

AARON and *Miriam* murmuring againſt *Moſes* their brother, becauſe he had married a *Midianitiſh* woman; God reproves them for it, and ſmites *Miriam* with leproſy; but heals her again at the requeſt of *Moſes*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may here conſider, I. That *Moſes*, who had been ſo often expoſed to the murmurings of the people, was now expoſed to thoſe of his own brother and ſiſter; which ſhews us, that good men are often expoſed to croſſes and trials, even from thoſe who ought to comfort and aſſiſt them. II. That God thought fit, on this occaſion, to confirm the authority of *Moſes*, by preferring him before all other prophets; and by puniſhing *Miriam* with leproſy.

III. That

III. That *Moſes* prayed for *Miriam*, though he was ſo much injured by her; and that it was on account of his prayers that ſhe was healed. This is a proof of his great meekneſs, and teaches us to return good to thoſe that do us evil, and to pray for them, and to be far from wiſhing them evil, or doing any to them. This likewiſe proves, that the interceſſion of pious and charitable men appeaſes the wrath of God, and engages him to return with his grace and favour.

CHAP. XIII.

THE people being come to the borders of *Canaan*, *Moſes* ſends into it twelve ſpies, who brought back word that the country was very fruitful; but ten of them diſcouraged the people from going thither.

REFLECTIONS.

IT was God's pleaſure *Moſes* ſhould ſend ſpies into the land of *Canaan*, that the people of *Iſrael* might be encouraged to go and inhabit that country, which was ſo fruitful; this was an inſtance of the divine goodneſs towards them. But the people, intimidated by the report of ten of the ſpies, were diſcouraged, and diſregarded all that *Joſhua* and *Caleb* could ſay to encourage them to go into the land of *Canaan*, and the promiſe God had made them of giving them that country. Such is often the ingratitude and incredulity of men, when God would pour his favours upon them, they will not lay hold on them. The behaviour of the *Iſraelites*, and of thoſe ſpies who diſheartened the people, is a lively repreſentation of the ſentiments of thoſe, who, inſtead of encouraging themſelves in their duty, and endeavouring to overcome the difficulties they meet with in their way

to heaven, loſe courage themſelves, and diſcourage others too; fancying thoſe difficulties to be invincible, and the duties of holineſs beyond our ſtrength. But *Joſhua* and *Caleb* are like thoſe zealous perſons, who do not ſuffer themſelves to be carried away by the multitude, but cleave ſtedfaſtly to God and to their duty, and are not diſcouraged at the proſpect of any difficulties they may meet with, any conflicts they are to undergo.

CHAP. XIV.

I. THE children of *Iſrael* being diſheartned by the ten ſpies, murmur againſt *Moſes*, talk of returning into *Egypt*, and threaten to ſtone *Joſhua* and *Caleb*; at which God was ſo provoked, that he was going to deſtroy the people; but by the prayer of *Moſes* was prevailed upon to pardon them: he declared, however, that all thoſe who came out of *Egypt*, from twenty years old and upwards, ſhould not enter into the land of *Canaan*, but ſhould die in the wilderneſs, except *Joſhua* and *Caleb*, who alone ſhould enter into it. II. God ſlew the ten men who had cauſed the people to murmur: and the children of *Iſrael*, ſeeing the Lord was wroth with them, would go out againſt the *Canaanites*, though *Moſes* forbad them; but were defeated.

REFLECTIONS.

WE muſt conſider here the ſin of the *Iſraelites* in rebelling againſt *Moſes*, as they had done ſo many times before; and his love to them, which induced him to intercede for them; and the puniſhment God inflicted upon them for their ſin. All the *Iſraelites* that came out of *Egypt*, above twenty years old, actually periſhed during the forty years they were in the wilderneſs, except *Joſhua* and *Caleb*, who

who entered into the land of *Canaan*. But ſince *Eleazar*, the ſon of *Aaron*, did likewiſe enter in, as we read *Joſh.* xiv. 1. and xxiv. 33. it may be doubted whether the prieſts and Levites, who were not numbered with the people, were included in this puniſhment. The chief reflection we are to make upon this hiſtory, is, that as the unbelief of the *Jews* was the reaſon they did not enter into the land of *Canaan*, but died in the wilderneſs; we ought to fear likewiſe, leſt our unbelief ſhould hinder us from entering into heaven. This reflection is thus expreſſed by the apoſtle: *To day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, as thoſe who ſinned, and whoſe carcaſes fell in the wilderneſs; and to whom he ſware in his wrath, that they ſhould not enter into his reſt. So we ſee that they could not enter in, becauſe of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, leſt a promiſe being left us of entering into his reſt, any of us ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it: let us therefore labour to enter into that reſt, leſt any of us fall by the ſame example of unbelief.* The puniſhment that God inflicted upon the ten ſpies who had diſheartned the people, and the promiſe he made *Joſhua* and *Caleb*, that they alone ſhould enter into the land of *Canaan*, ſhew us, that thoſe who are the occaſion of offence, and draw others into ſin, ſhall receive the puniſhment due to it; but that God is kind, and bleſſes thoſe that are faithful to him. Laſtly, The ill ſucceſs that the children of *Iſrael* had when they would go and engage with the *Canaanites*, ſhews us, that whatever is undertaken againſt the will of God can never ſucceed.

CHAP. XV.

I. IN the firſt part of this chapter, God gives directions concerning the meat-offerings and drink-

drink-offerings which were to be offered with all their ſacrifices, both by the children of *Iſrael* and by ſtrangers; and commands them to make an heave-offering of the firſt of their dough. II. He preſcribes the manner of atoning for ſins committed by ignorance. III. He orders, that thoſe who ſin preſumptuouſly ſhould be put to death; which command was then executed on the man that gathered ſticks upon the ſabbath-day. IV. God orders the *Jews* to put fringes to the borders of their garments, that they might always remember the law of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

THE former part of this chapter, which treats of meat-offerings and drink-offerings, ſacrifices and oblations, ſuggeſts to us two reflections: One is, that which St. *Paul* makes in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, where he ſays, that they then offered gifts and ſacrifices, which ſtood only in meats and drinks, and divers waſhings, and carnal ordinances, which could not purge the conſcience, and were to ſubſiſt only till the time of reformation, that is, till the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*. In this diſpenſation we ſhould acknowledge, on one hand, the divine wiſdom in appointing ceremonies ſuited to the ſtate of the *Jews*, and well adapted to teach them the duties of piety and gratitude to their maker; and, on the other, the excellence of that worſhip preſcribed in the goſpel, and the perfection of Chriſt's ſacrifice. The other is, that ſtrangers were likewiſe admitted to offer their ſacrifices; which intimated, that they were not intirely excluded from the grace of God; and that the time would come, when they ſhould be received into covenant with him. From the ſecond part of this chapter we learn, that there is a difference between ſins committed through ignorance, and wilful ſins; that altho' the firſt are not ſo great as

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the other, yet God ſtill conſiders them as real ſins, for which we ought humbly to ſue for pardon, and heartily repent of them. As for thoſe ſins that are committed wilfully and obſtinately, they are certainly much more enormous, ſince no ſacrifices could atone for them, but they were puniſhed with death; which was the caſe of the man that had gathered ſticks on the ſabbath-day. This proves that deliberate ſins, and ſuch as are contrary to the poſitive commands of God, are very great. This is St. *Paul*'s reflection on this occaſion, when he ſays, *That if we ſin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin*; and that *if thoſe who deſpiſed Moſes's law, died without mercy, ſuch as ſhall trample under foot the ſon of God, will be thought worthy of a much ſorer puniſhment.* The law concerning the fringes that the *Jews* were to wear upon their clothes, was to put them in mind never to depart from the commandments of God; and we are likewiſe to learn from thence, always to have the law of the Lord before our eyes, and to frame our lives in conformity to it.

CHAP. XVI.

I. KORAH, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, raiſed a rebellion againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron*, with an intent to rob them of their authority, and take the prieſthood upon themſelves; but God deſtroyed the rebels in a miſerable manner. II. After this example of divine vengeance, God ordered them to take the cenſers of thoſe who had rebelled againſt *Moſes*, and were conſumed by fire, to the number of two hundred and fifty, and to make with them plates to cover the altar of burnt offerings, to be a memorial of this event. III. The people again murmuring, God de-

ſtroyed fourteen thouſand and ſeven hundred of them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory of the ſedition raiſed againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron*, by *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, and of the terrible puniſhment God inflicted upon them, and thoſe that were joined with them, is very remarkable: the earth opening and ſwallowing up the former, and fire from heaven conſuming the latter. This ſevere vengeance, which confirmed the authority of *Moſes* and *Aaron*, ſhews alſo that every one ought to abide in his calling, and ſubmit himſelf to the order that God has eſtabliſhed; that none ought to aſſume to themſelves the honour of the miniſtry, nor exerciſe its functions, unleſs God has called them to it; and that thoſe who diſturb the peace of civil ſociety, or the order of the church, by ſetting themſelves up againſt thoſe whom God has placed in authority over them, ſtrive againſt God himſelf, and expoſe themſelves to his vengeance. We are likewiſe informed in this hiſtory, that *Moſes* endeavoured to appeaſe the rebels, and did by his prayers avert the wrath of God, which was kindled againſt all the congregations: which was a proof of the meekneſs of this great prophet, and of his love to thoſe who had rebelled againſt him. Thus ought we, inſtead of fretting and wiſhing evil to thoſe who injure us, labour to bring them back to their duty, and interceed with God for them. We have ſeen, likewiſe, that the people, inſtead of growing wiſer by what had happened to the rebels, murmured again the next day againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron*, and drew upon themſelves a puniſhment more terrible, and more general than ever. This is an inſtance of the unaccountable ſtupidity of that people; and ſhews us, that when people do not grow better by the firſt corrections,

rections, God ſends greater upon them; and that he does not only puniſh the authors of diſorders and offences, but likewiſe thoſe who ſuffer themſelves to be drawn away to do evil by the inſtigation and evil examples of others. Add to this, that theſe ſevere judgments were neceſſary to awe ſuch a people as the *Iſraelites*, and keep them to their duty.

CHAP. XVII.

GOD confirms, by a miracle, the choice he had made of *Aaron* and his family for the exerciſe of the prieſthood; and the people, terrified and affrighted, acknowledge their ſin in murmuring againſt *Aaron*.

REFLECTIONS.

AFTER God had vindicated the authority of *Aaron*'s miniſtry, by puniſhing thoſe who had ſet themſelves againſt him, he was pleaſed to confirm it again by a new miracle, which muſt needs have made a deep impreſſion upon the people of *Iſrael*. He was pleaſed likewiſe that *Aaron*'s rod, which had budded, ſhould be preſerved in the tabernacle, in the moſt holy place, to perpetuate the memory of this event. From whence we may learn, that it is in no caſe lawful to oppoſe the divine ordinances; that we muſt ſubmit to thoſe whom God has eſtabliſhed the governors of his church; and that no one ought to oppoſe them, nor uſurp their offices; nor in general diſturb that order which God would have reign in the church, and in the ſtate.

CHAP. XVIII.

GOD commands that the Levites ſhould be joined to the prieſts, for the ſervice of the tabernacle; and

and provides for their ſubſiſtance in the following manner. They were to poſſeſs no lands, but the prieſts were to have for themſelves and families the oblations and the firſt fruits, and other things offered in the tabernacle; and the Levites were to have the tithes, upon condition they would give to the prieſts the tenth part of thoſe tithes.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are informed in this chapter in what manner God regulated the offices of the prieſts and Levites, and how he provided for their ſubſiſtance. The tribe of *Levi* had no part nor inheritance in the land of *Canaan*, as the other tribes had; but had for their ſhare the tithes of the whole country; and the prieſts in particular had their portion of the ſacrifices and offerings, and a tenth part of the tithes. By this means, the miniſters of religion were ſupported in a comfortable and decent manner, without being forced to neglect the duties of their function to provide for the neceſſities of the body. This proves that, in the Chriſtian church, proviſion ſhould be made for the maintenance of thoſe that ſerve in the ſacred miniſtry, as St. *Paul* teaches, *They which miniſter about holy things, live of the things of the temple; and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar; even ſo hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the goſpel ſhould live of the goſpel.*

CHAP. XIX.

THIS chapter contains the ceremonies that were practiſed in the ſacrifice of the red heifer, which was burnt, in order to make with its aſhes a water to be ſprinkled upon the unclean to purify them.

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REFLECTIONS.

THE reflection which St. *Paul* makes, in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, on what we read in this chapter is, *that if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the aſhes of an heifer, ſprinkling the unclean, ſanctified to the purifying of the fleſh; much more ſhall the blood of Chriſt purge our conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God.* To which let us add, that if God commanded the *Jews*, upon pain of death, to purify themſelves according to the ceremonies here preſcribed; thoſe who neglect to cleanſe their ſouls from real uncleanneſs, even the pollution of ſin, are ſtill leſs qualified to have any communion with him.

CHAP. XX.

WHAT is related in this and the following chapters, happened towards the end of the forty years which the children of *Iſrael* ſpent in the wilderneſs. In this chapter *Moſes* gives an account, I. Of the death of his ſiſter *Miriam*. II. Of the miracle wrought by God, in cauſing water to come out of a rock to appeaſe the murmuring of the people, and what at that time happened to *Moſes* and *Aaron*. II. The *Edomites* refuſing to let the *Iſraelites* paſs through their country; and laſtly, the death of *Aaron*, who was ſucceeded by his ſon *Eleazar*.

REFLECTIONS.

MOSES informs us in this chapter, that the *Iſraelites*, after ſo many mercies received from God, and ſo many chaſtiſements inflicted on them, relapſed, in the wilderneſs of *Zin*, into their former murmurings; and that God, in his great goodneſs, did, notwithſtanding their baſe ingratitude, give them water

water after a wonderful manner. Thus do men harden their hearts, and ſlight the mercies, and deſpiſe the corrections of the Almighty; and thus does he, in his abundant goodneſs, ſtill bear with them and do them good. We have ſeen likewiſe that *Moſes* and *Aaron* were both excluded from the land of *Canaan*, for not having faith enough upon this occaſion, tho' they had wrought a like miracle before at *Rephidim*. God puniſhes the want of faith even in the faithful themſelves; and though he pardons their infirmities, he does not always exempt them from temporal puniſhments; which he does for their own good and advantage, and to make them examples to others. The *Edomites* refuſing to let *Iſrael* paſs through their country, though they were deſcended from the patriarchs by *Eſau*, *Jacob*'s brother, ſhews, that the *Edomites* began already to look upon the *Iſraelites* with a jealous eye. The *Edomites* were almoſt ever after enemies to the people of God. However, the *Iſraelites* did not, on this occaſion, make war upon them, becauſe they looked upon them as brethren, and becauſe God had given the *Edomites* the country which they inhabited.

CHAP. XXI.

IN this chapter begins the account of the *Iſraelites* wars with the *Canaanites*. I. Their firſt war was with king *Arad*, whom they conquered. II. *Moſes* next gives an account of their murmuring, and being puniſhed by fiery ſerpents. III. The people paſſing through ſeveral places, deſtroyed *Sihon* king of the *Amorites*, and *Og* the king of *Baſhan*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things to be obſerved in this chapter: I. We ſee in the children of *Iſrael*'s victory

victory over king *Arad*, over *Sihon* king of the *Amorites*, and *Og* king of *Baſhan*, that the promiſe God had made of giving them the land of *Canaan*, began to be fulfilled even whilſt *Moſes* lived. II. From the hiſtory of the fiery ſerpents, we may obſerve, on one hand, that as the *Iſraelites* fell again into their old ſin of murmuring, they drew upon themſelves new plagues; by all which God deſtroyed, by degrees, the whole generation that came out of *Egypt*, and which was not to enter into the land of *Canaan*. On the other hand, the wonderful manner in which the people was healed of the biting of thoſe ſerpents, by means of a brazen ſerpent, muſt needs convince them that it was God who had ſent among them the fiery ſerpent, and that he alone was their deliverer from them. But above all, this hiſtory ought to bring into our minds the words of our Lord: *As Moſes lifted up the ſerpent in the wilderneſs, ſo muſt the ſon of man be lifted up; that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life*; and what St. *Paul* ſays, *Let us not tempt Chriſt, as the Iſraelites tempted, and were deſtroyed of ſerpents.*

CHAP. XXII.

I. BALACK, king of *Moab*, alarmed with their victories, ſends for *Balaam* to curſe the children of *Iſrael*; which *Balaam* at firſt refuſed to do, becauſe God had forbid him. II. But the king having ſent for him a ſecond time, *Balaam* being tempted by his promiſes, enquires of God what he ſhould do. God does not hinder him going to the king of *Moab*; but to convince him that his journey diſpleaſed him, he opened the mouth of the aſs he rode upon, and ſent an angel to oppoſe his journey. III. *Balaam* being arrived in the country of the *Moabites*, was received by *Balak* with great marks of honour.

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REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory furniſhes us with ſeveral reflections. The firſt is, that *Balaam* had the knowledge of the true God, and that God revealed himſelf to him, tho' he lived among idolators, and was himſelf a wicked and a covetous man. God, who ſometimes endues wicked men with his gifts, in order to bring about his deſigns, was pleaſed to make uſe of *Balaam* as an inſtrument to preſerve the knowledge of the Divine Being in the country where he lived. II. We muſt take notice of the covetouſneſs and hypocriſy of *Balaam*; who, as God had forbid him to go to the king of the *Moabites*, and he had proteſted that he would not tranſgreſs the commandment of the Lord, ought not to have conſulted God any more about it; but he being tempted by the promiſes of *Balak*, applied to God a ſecond time. Thus do ſinners reſiſt the will of God, and ſeek after means to gratify their paſſions: and thus are covetous men, in particular, capable of doing any thing to ſatisfy their ruling paſſion. III. It is to be obſerved, that God ſeeing *Balaam* was deſirous to go to the king of *Moab*, let him alone, though he did not approve of the occaſion of his journey. When God has ſufficiently informed men of his will, if they will afterwards reſiſt him, and endeavour to blind and ſeduce themſelves, he does not hinder them from doing what they are bent upon; but, however, they can do nothing but what he permits. IV. God's ſending an angel, and miraculouſly forming in the mouth of the aſs ſounds like thoſe of the human voice, tended to ſurprize him, and convince him of his ſin and rebellion, as St. *Peter* remarks in the ſecond chapter of his ſecond epiſtle. Laſtly, we ſee that *Balaam*, being terrified, would have gone back again; but that God ordered him to continue his journey: which was done,

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becauſe the prophet had obeyed only through fear, and becauſe God would make uſe of him to bleſs his people. Let us learn from hence, that God accepts of no forced obedience; that when ſinners embark in undertakings contrary to his will, he does not prevent them in ſpite of themſelves, but makes them, contrary to their own intention, ſubſervient to the execution of his purpoſes.

CHAP. XXIII.

BALAAM having twice offered ſacrifices, bleſſes the people of *Iſrael* each time, inſtead of curſing them, as *Balak* had deſired; at which that prince being incenſed, carries the prophet to another place, in hopes of making him curſe the people from thence.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may obſerve from this chapter, that although *Balak* uſed his utmoſt endeavours to make *Balaam* curſe the children of *Iſrael*, and though *Balaam*, allured by the promiſes of that prince, would have been really glad to do it, yet God did not permit him, but, on the contrary, obliged him to bleſs them. This is an example which ſhews, that God does always rule over the wicked; that he does not ſuffer them to do his children that harm which they deſire; nay, that he makes uſe of them to do them good. *Balaam*'s repeated bleſſings, and all that he ſaid in favour of the children of *Iſrael*, ſhould have convinced the *Moabites* that they were the favourites of heaven, and that nothing can hurt thoſe whom God loves and deſigns to bleſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIV.

I. *BALAAM* bleſſes the people of *Iſrael* a third time, and foretels their great proſperity. II. He advertiſes *Balak* what was to happen in the laſt days to the *Moabites*, and to other nations.

REFLECTIONS.

LET it be conſidered, in the firſt place, that God thought fit *Balaam* ſhould go on to bleſs the *Iſraelites*, and foretel the privileges and glory of this people, in order to intimidate the *Moabites* and the reſt of their neighbours, and by that means facilitate their conqueſt of the land of *Canaan*. II. We ſee, in the ſequel of this hiſtory, that the attempts of the wicked againſt the children of God, are not only ineffectual, but that they often turn to their own ruin, and to the advantage of the faithful. Of this we have a remarkable example in *Balaam*, ſince, inſtead of curſing the children of *Iſrael*, as the king of the *Moabites* had deſired, he bleſſes them, and foretels the deſtruction of the *Moabites* themſelves. As for the reſt, the prophecies of *Balaam*, concerning the people here mentioned, import, that a great king, of the ſeed of *Iſrael*, that is *David*, ſhould deſtroy the *Moabites* and the *Edomites*; that the *Amalekites* ſhould likewiſe be deſtroyed; that the *Kenites* ſhould be carried away into captivity by the *Aſſyrians*; that afterwards the *Aſſyrians* ſhould be conquered by thoſe of *Chittim*, that is to ſay, by the *Macedonians*; and that at length they alſo ſhould be ſubdued; which accordingly happened by the *Romans*. All theſe prophecies are remarkable, becauſe they inform us of that which was to happen to all theſe people ſeveral ages after.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXV.

THE daughters of the *Moabites* having, by the advice of *Balaam*, drawn the children of *Iſrael* into the ſins of uncleanneſs and idolatry, God puniſhes them for it, deſtroying them in great numbers; and as *Phineas* had ſhewn his zeal upon that occaſion, God promiſes the prieſthood to him and his poſterity.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we have been juſt now reading, leads us to conſider, that the children of *Iſrael*, whom the *Moabites* could not hurt, nor *Balaam* curſe, were drawn into idolatry by the daughters of the *Moabites*, and by their own ſenſuality, and by that means expoſed to the wrath of God. This teaches us, that we have more to fear from our paſſions, than from the malice of our enemies; and that it is a very dangerous thing to ſuffer ourſelves to be ſeduced by voluptuouſneſs, and the deſires of the fleſh. This is the application which St. *Paul* makes of this hiſtory, when he ſays in the firſt epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, *Theſe things are written, to the end that we ſhould not commit fornication, as ſome of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thouſand.* The zeal that *Moſes* and *Phineas* ſhewed on that occaſion, in ſlaying, by the commandment of God, thoſe that had defiled themſelves with uncleanneſs and idolatry, and God's rewarding *Phineas*, prove, that we muſt zealouſly oppoſe, by all juſt and lawful means, thoſe that offend God openly; that this is in particular the duty of magiſtrates, and the miniſters of religion; and that God rewards the fidelity of thoſe who thus expreſs their zeal for his glory.

CHAP. XXVI.

THE children of *Iſrael*, a little before the death of *Moſes*, are again numbered, according to their tribes and families; the number of thoſe who were taken into the account, from twenty years old and upward, was ſix hundred and one thouſand, ſeven hundred and thirty men; and the Levites twenty three thouſand.

REFLECTIONS.

I. GOD would have *Moſes* take the number of the children of *Iſrael* before his death; that in the diviſion to be made of the land of *Canaan*, where they were ſhortly to enter, every tribe might have a portion aſſigned it, ſuitable to the number of perſons which it contained. II. Their numbers were much the ſame as they were forty years before, when they came out of *Egypt*. The people did not multiply during the forty years they ſojourned in the wilderneſs; becauſe God, during that time, deſtroyed all thoſe who came out of *Egypt*, above twenty years old; ſo that all the men of vigor dying in the wilderneſs, and not growing old, their number could not increaſe. This *Moſes* acknowledges in the ninetieth Pſalm.

CHAP. XXVII.

I. A Man, named *Zelophehad*, dying without male-iſſue, his daughters, fearing they ſhould have no part given them in the land of *Canaan*, when the land was divided, came to *Moſes* and *Eleazar*, and entreated that the inheritance, which would have fallen to their father, had he lived, might be given unto them. Upon which God gave command, that when

when a man had no ſons, his inheritance at his death ſhould paſs to his daughters. II. *Moſes* appoints *Joſhua* to ſucceed him after his death.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflection we are to make upon the law which God gave concerning the daughters of *Zelophehad* is, that God deſigned by this means to preſerve the diſtinction of families and inheritances among the *Jews*, and to cauſe the daughters to inherit what of right belonged them; from whence we may learn, that no one ought to be deprived of his right of inheritance, but that we ought to give to every one that which belongs to him. We ſee the zeal and piety of *Moſes*, as well as his love to the *Iſraelites*, in his prayer to God, to give them a ruler to ſucceed him after his death. And the command which the Lord gave *Moſes* to appoint *Joſhua*, to preſent him before the prieſt, and before all the congregation, and to lay his hands upon him, is a mark of the care God took of his people *Iſrael*. Thus ought we to pray God to raiſe up good governors both in church and ſtate, and to beſtow his gifts on thoſe whom he calls to ſo important an office.

CHAP. XXVIII, XXIX.

THE twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth chapters treat of the ſacrifices, of the meat-offerings and drink-offerings, which were to be offered by the *Jews* in the continual burnt-offering, which was preſented to God every day, morning and evening; and in the ſacrifices of the ſabbath, of the new-moon, of the paſſover, and of pentecoſt; with thoſe on the feaſt of trumpets, on the day of atonement, and in the feaſt of tabernacles.

REFLECTIONS *on chap.* xxviii, xxix.

THE laws contained in theſe two chapters being, except in a few circumſtances, only a repetition of thoſe we read in the twelfth and twenty-ninth chapters of *Exodus*, and in the twenty-third chapter of *Leviticus*, the reflections to be made on them, may be ſeen at the end of thoſe chapters. Theſe laws, which were given forty years before, God thought fit *Moſes* ſhould repeat before his death, by reaſon of their great importance. What we are here particularly to obſerve on the twenty-eighth chapter, is, that the firſt days of every month were dedicated to acts of religion. St. *Paul* obſerves, that this, as well as the other feſtivals of the *Jews*, are aboliſhed under the goſpel. But if Chriſtians are no longer obliged to obſerve theſe, they ought ſtill to preſerve the ſpirit and deſign of them, which is, to dedicate to God the whole time of their lives, and to preſerve the remembrance of all his mercies.

CHAP. XXX.

THIS chapter treats of vows, whether made by man or woman; and here God appoints how they ſhall be kept, and how far vows made by virgins, married women, widows, and by women divorced, ſhould or ſhould not be binding.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter, concerning vows, teaches us two things: I. That God required the *Jews* religiouſly to obſerve their vows and oaths; and therefore, that we are obliged before God to keep, with the greateſt exactneſs, all lawful vows, and that nothing can diſpenſe with the obligation of them.

them. II. That raſh vows, and ſuch as we have no right to make, may be revoked in certain caſes, provided it be done by thoſe who have a proper right and authority to do it. It appears alſo from this chapter, that God would not have the authority of fathers and huſbands infringed in the leaſt degree.

CHAP. XXXI.

THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of the war which the children of *Iſrael* made againſt the *Midianites*, and of the victory they obtained over them. This victory was very conſiderable, as well as the ſpoil which was taken from the enemy, of which we have here a detail. This ſpoil was divided between the ſoldiers and all the people, after a portion of it was firſt dedicated to the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

THREE things are chiefly obſervable in this hiſtory: I. That the *Midianites*, who were enemies to the *Iſraelites*, were overcome; and particularly, that *Balaam* was killed among them, as well as the women who had ſeduced the children of *Iſrael*. This was a juſt judgment upon the *Midianites*, and upon *Balaam*; and the death of that prophet, by whoſe counſel the daughters of *Midian* had enticed the *Iſraelites* into idolatry and uncleanneſs, ſhews, that God puniſhes thoſe that are the occaſion of other mens ſins. II. The great ſpoil which was taken from the *Midianites*, was divided, by God's command, between thoſe who went to the war, and thoſe that remained in the camp; which was a very juſt law. III. As God commanded the officers of the army to offer to him what they had taken from the *Midianites* of the greateſt value, we ought to

give God the glory of all our good ſucceſs, and to devote to his honour and ſervice all the good things we enjoy, all the advantages which he has vouchſafed to us. There is one remarkable circumſtance in this hiſtory; which is, that the *Iſraelites* loſt not one ſingle man in the engagement; which was a very extraordinary proof of the divine protection and aſſiſtance. Further, this victory contributed to render the children of *Iſrael* very powerful, ſince they were delivered by this means from a very formidable enemy, and were greatly enriched by the ſpoil; which helped to make the conqueſt of the land of *Canaan* eaſier afterwards.

CHAP. XXXII.

THE *Jews* of the tribe of *Reuben*, and of the tribe of *Gad*, intreated *Moſes* to give them the country that had been conquered beyond *Jordan*; which *Moſes* granted them, upon condition they would aſſiſt the reſt of the tribes in conquering the land of *Canaan*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two obſervations to be made upon this chapter: I. The firſt relates to the diſtribution which was made to the two tribes and a half, of the country beyond *Jordan*. By this *Moſes* might ſee before his death that the promiſes God had made his people, to give them the land of *Canaan*, were beginning to be fulfilled; and that the other tribes would infallibly poſſeſs all that was on the other ſide *Jordan*. II. The ſecond obſervation is, that God ordered the two tribes and a half to aſſiſt in conquering the land of *Canaan*, for the nine other tribes, who had helped them to ſubdue the country which was fallen to their lot. From whence

we

we may learn, that we ought to obſerve the ſtrict rules of juſtice in every reſpect, and aſſiſt one another; and in general, that Chriſtians, being all brethren, ought to aſſiſt each other to the utmoſt of their power.

CHAP. XXXIII.

I. IN this chapter we have an account of the ſeveral journeys and encampments of the children of *Iſrael*, during the forty years they were in the wilderneſs. II. God commands them to deſtroy the *Canaanites* and their idols, and divide the land of *Canaan* by lot.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE ſeveral journeys of the children of *Iſrael*, mentioned in this chapter, were agreeable to the will of God, ſince the cloud which accompanied them directed them in the way they were to take, and where they were to ſtop. II. During the forty years they were in the wilderneſs, they often changed their abode, having made in that time two and forty encampments; becauſe, being ſo very numerous, they could not have long ſubſiſted in the ſame place with their flocks. III. The ſacred hiſtory relates only what happened at the beginning and at the end of the forty years; by reaſon the moſt conſiderable events of that part of the hiſtory of this people, happened juſt after their coming out of the land of *Egypt*, and a little before their entering into the land of *Canaan*, and the death of *Moſes*.

CHAP. XXXIV.

I. MOSES, by the command of God, ſettles the borders of the land of *Canaan*, which remained unconquered on the other ſide *Jordan*. II. He orders that country to be divided to the nine tribes and a half, and names the perſons who were to make the diviſion.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is ſomething very remarkable, that before the children of *Iſrael* had begun to conquer the land of *Canaan*, which was on the other ſide *Jordan*, *Moſes*, by divine inſpiration, ſettled exactly the bounds of that country. This is an evident proof of the ſovereign power of God, who thus diſpoſed of a country which the *Iſraelites* were not yet in poſſeſſion of, but of which he would ſoon make them maſters. II. The obedience of *Moſes* to the command of God, making known his will to the *Iſraelites*, is a proof of his faith, and of his firm perſuaſion that God would give them the land which he had promiſed to their fathers. III. God appointed, before the death of *Moſes*, the perſons who were to make the diviſion, to prevent the confuſion and diſputes which might ariſe, if it had not been regulated. He ordered that this ſhould be done under the direction of *Eleazar* the high prieſt, and *Joſhua*, ſucceſſor of *Moſes*, by the deputies and heads of every tribe. In all this God acted as their ſupreme Lord and Maſter; which engaged them to reſpect every thing that was done on this occaſion as proceeding from God himſelf.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXV.

I. GOD commands, that forty-eight cities be appointed for the Levites to dwell in; out of which, ſix were to be choſen for cities of refuge to ſuch as ſhould accidentally kill any one. II. He moſt expreſly forbids them, upon any pretence whatſoever, to ſuffer thoſe to live, who had been guilty of wilful murder; and gives them rules, how to judge in the caſe both of wilful and accidental murder.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD's appointing cities for the Levites to dwell in, expreſſes the care he took of the miniſters of religion; whence we ought to conclude, that God would have us provide for the maintenance of thoſe that ſerve the church. The laws concerning murderers are a leſſon to all, and eſpecially to judges and magiſtrates, that wilful murder is a crime which ought to be avenged. God does here expreſly, and ſeveral times, forbid to let a murderer live, or to take any ranſom for his life. He declares, that the impunity of that crime, draws a curſe upon the country where it is committed; and that there ſhall be no atonement for that land, where the ſhedding of blood ſhall be ſuffered to go unpuniſhed; which ought to beget in us an extreme horror for murder, and every thing that leads to it; as it proves likewiſe, that princes and magiſtrates have no authority to acquit wilful murderers. As to involuntary and accidental murder, for which God had appointed cities of refuge, the laws of God on that head ſhew, that ſuch murder ought not to be puniſhed; that in general, every thing that is done involuntarily, and without our fault, does not render us guilty either before God or man.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVI.

BY the law contained in this chapter, it is ordained, that thoſe daughters who ſhould inherit the poſſeſſion belonging to their family, ſhould be obliged to marry in their own tribe.

REFLECTIONS.

THE law contained in this chapter was given as an explanation of that ſet down in the twenty-ſeventh chapter of this Book, concerning the daughters of *Zelophehad*, who were admitted to enjoy their portion in the inheritance of their tribe. They came to *Moſes*, and aſked him, whether, if theſe daughters ſhould marry into another tribe, thoſe eſtates would paſs to that tribe? Upon which God commanded, that, in ſuch caſe, the daughters ſhould marry in their own tribe. But this regarded only thoſe daughters who inherited eſtates in land; others might marry out of their tribe, of which we have ſome examples in the ſacred hiſtory. The deſign of this law was to prevent confuſion of tribes and inheritances; as the diſtinction of families and tribes was to ſubſiſt till the coming of the Meſſiah.

The end of the fourth Book of MOSES *called* NUMBERS.

THE

THE FIFTH BOOK of MOSES, CALLED DEUTERONOMY.

ARGUMENT.

The fifth Book of Moſes *is called* Deuteronomy. *This word ſignifies a ſecond law: and this Book is ſo called, becauſe it is a repetition of the laws which God had given forty years before to the children of* Iſrael, *after their coming out of the land of* Egypt. *It pleaſed God that* Moſes *ſhould repeat theſe laws before his death, becauſe thoſe that had heard them the firſt time, were all dead in the wilderneſs. Beſides this, we read in this Book ſeveral beautiful exhortations, which* Moſes *addreſſed to the children of* Iſrael *before his death.*

CHAP. I.

MOSES mentions, I. The way which the children of *Iſrael* had taken when they came out of the land of *Egypt*. II. The appointing of judges and magiſtrates over the people. III. Their departure from *Horeb*, and arrival at *Kadeſh-barnea*, and what befel them when they rebelled againſt God, after the ſpies had been ſent to view the land of *Canaan*; and in what manner God puniſhed their rebellion.

RE-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE repetition that *Moſes*, by God's command, made of what had happened to the *Iſraelites*, and of the laws which God had given them, was deſigned for the inſtruction of that people; and ſhews, that he would always have us remember his favours and commands. II. It appears from this chapter, that it is agreeable to the will of God, and very neceſſary to keep up order in a ſociety, that there ſhould be magiſtrates and judges; but this truſt ſhould be committed to men of great integrity, who diſcharge their office conſcientiouſly, and do juſtice to every body, without reſpect to perſons. III. *Moſes* reminds the *Iſraelites* of the rebellion of their fathers, and of the puniſhment inflicted on them, that they might learn by this example, not to rebel as their fathers had done. This recital ſhould have made the greater impreſſion upon them, as the threatnings denounced on that occaſion were accompliſhed; for of all thoſe who were alive at the time of that rebellion, and came out of *Egypt*, there were none remaining except *Joſhua* and *Caleb*. St. *Paul* ſhews us the uſe we ought to make of this hiſtory, when he tells us, in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, that as the murmurings and rebellions of the children of *Iſrael* made God ſwear they ſhould not enter into the land of *Canaan*; ſo we ſhould take care, that we be not excluded, by our unbelief and diſobedience to the goſpel, from the heavenly *Canaan*; and from that reſt which is reſerved for the people of God.

CHAP. II.

MOSES relates, I. The paſſage of the children of *Iſrael* along the borders of the *Edomites*, *Moabites*, and *Ammonites*; and God's forbidding

ding them to treat thoſe people as enemies. II. Their victory over *Sihon*, king of the *Amorites*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may make two reflections upon this chapter: I. That when the children of *Iſrael* paſſed along the borders of the *Edomites*, *Moabites*, and *Ammonites*, and they refuſed them a paſſage, God forbad the *Iſraelites* to do them any harm, becauſe they were of the ſame original; the *Edomities* being deſcended from *Eſau*, the brother of *Jacob*, and the *Moabites* and *Ammonites* from *Lot*, *Abraham*'s nephew. Another reaſon why God would not ſuffer the *Iſraelites* to treat theſe people as enemies, was, becauſe he had given them the country which they inhabited. Whence we may obſerve, that we ought never to revenge ourſelves, nor make war unjuſtly, nor take away from others that which belongs to them. II The ſecond reflection is, that the children of *Iſrael* ſubdued the king of the *Amorites*, and took his country, by the divine aſſiſtance; whereby they might diſcover the truth of the promiſes which God had made them, of giving them the land of *Canaan*, and be aſſured that he would ſoon put them in poſſeſſion of all the reſt of that country.

CHAP. III.

THIS chapter contains three things: I. The victory of the children of *Iſrael* over *Og*, the king of *Baſhan*. II. The giving to two tribes and a half, the country that had been conquered beyond *Jordan*. III. The prayer of *Moſes*, beſeeching God to ſuffer him to go into the land of *Canaan*; which God refuſed to grant.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

IT has been already remarked, on the twenty-firſt and twenty-ſecond chapters of *Numbers*, that God began to put the *Iſraelites* in poſſeſſion of the land of *Canaan*, by their victory over *Og*, king of *Baſhan*, and by giving his kingdom, and that of the *Amorites*, to the two tribes and a half. But what is moſt remarkable here, is the earneſt requeſt of *Moſes*, that he might go into the land of *Canaan*, and God's refuſing to grant him that favour, becauſe *Moſes* had not expreſſed a ſufficient degree of faith, when he fetched water out of the rock. God does not always hear the prayers which we offer up to him for temporal bleſſings; and though he pardons thoſe whom he loves, as he had pardoned *Moſes*, he thinks fit ſometimes to puniſh them in this life, for certain ſins which they have committed, both to humble them, and to give them a more lively ſenſe of their ſins, and for the example and inſtruction of others.

CHAP. IV. 1,——20.

I. MOSES exhorts the people to keep the laws of God; to remember the puniſhments they were viſited with, when they fell into idolatry, and worſhipped *Baal Peor*, the idol of the *Moabites*; and to conſider well the advantage they enjoyed above other nations, in being governed by laws ſo juſt and holy, as thoſe which God had given them. II. He relates what happened at the giving of the law; and forbids, above all things, the making any image of the godhead, or worſhipping the creatures.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

MOSES, after he had recounted the mercies and judgments of God upon the *Iſraelites*, exhorts them to fear him. This teaches us, that whether God afflict or bleſs us, it is only to engage us to ſerve him. II. That motive to obedience, which *Moſes* preſſed upon the children of *Iſrael* with ſo much evidence, repreſenting to them the glorious privilege they enjoyed above all other nations, in having God for their protector, and in knowing his holy laws, ſhould be well conſidered by us. His words are, *What nation is there ſo great, whoſe gods are ſo nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is unto us in all things that we call upon him for; and which hath ſtatutes and judgments ſo righteous, as all this law which he has given us?* Theſe words, applied to Chriſtians, have ſtill greater force; ſince God has ſo glorioufly diſtinguiſhed them, not only from all other people in the world, but even from the *Jews*; and they have the advantage of being guided by the divine and holy laws of the goſpel, given them by the Son of God; and therefore are under ſtill greater obligation to keep thoſe holy and righteous laws. III. It appears from this chapter, that we are forbidden, not only to worſhip falſe gods; but even to repreſent the true God by any image. Which engages us to abhor idolatry, of what kind ſoever it be; to bleſs God for making known to us the true way of worſhipping him; and to ſerve him faithfully in ſpirit and in truth, as he requires of us.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV. 21,——49.

I. *MOSES* goes on to exhort the *Jews* to avoid idolatry after his death; and ſolemnly declares, that if they forſook God, they would be driven out of the land of *Canaan*, and ſcattered over the whole earth; aſſuring them, however, that God would not forſake them utterly. II. He ſets before their eyes, in a moſt affecting manner, the favour of God towards them, in chuſing them for his people, in giving them his law, and working ſo many miracles for their ſakes. III. He appoints three cities of refuge, according to the command of God, in the country that had been conquered beyond *Jordan*.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us ſeriouſly reflect on what *Moſes* ſaid to the children of *Iſrael*, to turn them from idolatry, and induce them to keep the Lord's commands; particularly remembring that grave and ſolemn manner in which he called heaven and earth to witneſs againſt them, that if they departed from their duty, and the worſhip of God, they ſhould certainly periſh, and be ſcattered throughout the world; in ſuch wiſe, however, that if they improved under the chaſtiſements of the Lord, he would ſtill have mercy upon them. We ſee likewiſe with what evidence, with what majeſty, and with what meekneſs, this holy prophet called upon the *Jews* to conſider the advantage they had enjoyed in hearing the voice of God, and ſeeing all thoſe wondrous works which he had done for them. Theſe exhortations, which ſhould have made great impreſſions on the children of *Iſrael*, ought to affect us much more, who are choſen by God to be his true people; who have heard his voice, not as heretofore, from mount *Sinai* out of the midſt of the fire, but

but by his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*; who have experienced the wonderful effects of his powerful love, vaſtly ſurpaſſing thoſe which the *Jews* experienced. If after all this we ſhould neglect or deſpiſe theſe ineſtimable advantages, and forſake the Lord our God, and diſobey his commands, we cannot think to eſcape the ſevereſt puniſhment. Theſe are the reflections which we ought to make in the moſt ſerious manner; and that we may call them to mind, we ſhould frequently read and meditate on the excellent exhortations contained in this chapter.

CHAP. V.

I. *MOSES* repeats the ten commandments of the law, which had been publiſhed about forty years before upon mount *Sinai*. II. He tells them how exceedingly their fathers were terrified at the time of publiſhing it.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS repetition of the law in the preſence of all the people, ſhews, that it was the will of God, that it ſhould be preſerved and kept inviolably in all ages. There is ſome difference in the manner of expreſſing the fourth commandment, in this and the twentieth chapter of *Exodus*; here *Moſes* ſays, that the ſabbath day was alſo appointed to give reſt and refreſhment to their ſlaves, and to put them in mind that they themſelves had been ſlaves in *Egypt*. *Moſes* adds this as a more particular explanation of God's deſign in this commandment, which was intended to preſerve the remembrance of their deliverance from *Egyptian* bondage, as well as of the creation of the world. This law, which *Moſes* repeated, concerns Chriſtians as well as it did the *Jews*; wherefore we ought reverently to regard it, and obſerve its precepts, making it not only the rule of our

actions, but even of the thoughts and motions of our hearts. II. We ſee that the people of *Iſrael* were extremely terrified at the publication of the law. St. *Paul* remarks upon this occaſion, in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, that the curſes and puniſhments denounced in the goſpel are more dreadful than thoſe of the law of *Moſes*, and that *our God is a conſuming fire*; which ſhould fill us with great fear, and lead us to a ſincere and uniform obedience. III. The promiſes made by the *Jews*, to keep the law of God, ſhould move us to vow to him unfeigned obedience, and to perform, in a better manner than the *Jews* did, the vows and promiſes by which we are bound to his ſervice. When the people had vowed obedience, God ſaid to *Moſes*; *They have well ſaid all that they have ſpoken: O that there were ſuch a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always; that it might be well with them and with their children for ever!* Theſe words deſerve our utmoſt attention. From hence we clearly learn, that nothing is more acceptable to God than our obedience; that he deſires nothing but to load us with his favours, and make us happy; and that it is our own fault if we do not feel the effects of his love. It appears alſo from hence, that it is of no ſervice to make good reſolutions, if we do not perſevere, and put them in execution.

CHAP. VI.

MOSES exhorts the *Jews* to keep the commandments of God; to love him with all their heart; never to depart from his word; to have his law always before their eyes; and above all, to teach it to their children, and to inſtruct them in the wonderful things that God had done for their fathers.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE reading of this chapter teaches us, that ſince the God we worſhip is the only true God, our great and chief care ought to be to love him, to obey him, and to adhere inviolably to his word. II. This chapter teaches us, that it is the duty of parents to inſtruct their children in the law and in the fear of the Lord; to teach them the hiſtories contained in the holy ſcriptures, and to be always ſpeaking to them of God's mercies, and of his holy commandments. By this means, God deſigned to preſerve among the *Jews* the knowledge of himſelf and the true religion. If that people were obliged to the diſcharge of this duty, how much more are Chriſtians, who cannot neglect the education and inſtruction of their children without being guilty of a great ſin, and the greateſt ingratitude to their God? Laſtly, We ſhould all of us learn from hence, to call to mind continually the mercies of God, and to have his commandments without ceaſing before our eyes, that we may fear and love him. Herein, as *Moſes* ſays, will conſiſt our righteouſneſs and our happineſs, and our glory before God and man, if we take care to do all that the Lord our God has commanded us.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter conſiſts of two parts. I. God commands the *Iſraelites* utterly to deſtroy the *Canaanites*, and their idols. II. *Moſes* promiſes them, that if they obey the law of the Lord, he will bleſs them, and put them in poſſeſſion of the land of *Canaan*, notwithſtanding the number and ſtrength of the *Canaanites*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. FOR the right underſtanding of the firſt part of this chapter, we muſt know, that God commanded the children of *Iſrael* to deſtroy the *Canaanites*, to the end that that abominable people, whoſe corruption was at the height, might be puniſhed, and removed out of the world; and to hinder them from drawing away the *Jews* into iniquity: It was for the ſame reaſon that he forbad his people to make any alliances with thoſe nations. From whence we may draw this inſtruction, that God does at laſt deſtroy nations, when their wickedneſs is without remedy; and that we ſhould be afraid to have any dealings with the wicked, leſt we be involved in their ſins, and in their puniſhment. II. Let us ſeriouſly conſider the earneſt exhortation of *Moſes* to the *Jews*, to be an holy people, devoted to the Lord; and the aſſurance he gave them that God would bleſs them if they continued faithful to him, and would make them maſters of the *Canaanites* and their country. God has choſen us to be his people, that he might engage us to fear him. This ſhould be our chief care; and to this end, we ſhould always remember, that, as *Moſes* ſays, the God whom we worſhip is a mighty God and faithful, who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments; but repayeth them that hate him to their face, and will not let their diſobedience go unpuniſhed.

CHAP. VIII.

I. MOSES repreſents to the *Iſraelites*, how God had protected them, and the wonders he had done for their ſake, while they were in the wilderneſs;

derneſs; and that he had likewiſe chaſtened and corrected them. II. Next he ſpeaks to them of the riches and fruitfulneſs of the land of *Canaan*; and exhorts them not to abuſe the plenty and proſperity which they were to enjoy in that country, leſt they ſhould feel the effect of the divine vengeance.

REFLECTIONS.

THE inſtructions contained in this chapter are, I. That as *Moſes* ſet before the children of *Iſrael* God's favours and his corrections, to ſtir them up to fear him; ſo it is always very uſeful to meditate upon the mercies of God and the afflictions with which he viſits us. II. The warning which *Moſes* gave the *Jews*, to take care that the plenty and other advantages they ſhould enjoy in the land of *Canaan* did not corrupt them, teaches us, that men eaſily abuſe proſperity; that they forget God, and frequently fall into pride, diſobedience, and ingratitude, when they are too much at their eaſe; and ſo force God to take from them that eaſe and plenty which they made ſo ill an uſe of. Theſe exhortations of *Moſes* ſhould be well conſidered, that, whatever condition we are in, whether adverſity or proſperity, we may expreſs to God our ſubmiſſion, our love and gratitude. By this means ſhall we avert his judgments, and ſecure the continuance of his favour and protection.

CHAP. IX.

I. MOSES repreſents to the *Jews*, in the ſtrongeſt and moſt affecting terms, that though God had choſen them, and was going to give them the land of *Canaan*, it was not becauſe they were better than other nations, but by reaſon of the covenant he had made with their fathers, and of the wickedneſs of the *Canaanites*. II. Upon which occaſion he puts

them in mind of their rebellions; and particularly of the idolatry which their fathers had been guilty of in worſhipping the golden calf.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have ſeen in this chapter, how *Moſes* put the *Iſraelites* in mind of the free choice that God had made of them; and of the ſins whereby they provoked him to wrath on ſeveral occaſions. The inſtruction this affords is, that it is to the mercy of God alone we owe all our happineſs; and that, as *Moſes* ſaid to the *Jews*, it is not for our righteouſneſs that God has choſen us to be his people, and has ſaved us; but of his good pleaſure and pure mercy. This, which ought to be well conſidered, is a powerful motive to humility and gratitude. And as *Moſes* put the *Jews* in mind of the great ſin which their fathers had committed in worſhipping the golden calf, and of the puniſhment God had inflicted on them for that ſin, we ſhould likewiſe frequently call to mind our ſins, and the puniſhments that attended them, that we may have a more lively ſenſe of our own unworthineſs, and may not fall again into our former diſobedience.

CHAP. X.

I. *MOSES* recites how God gave the ſecond tables of the law, and renewed his covenant with the people of *Iſrael*, after the idolatry of the golden calf. II. He mentions the death of *Aaron*, and the calling of *Eleazar* and of the Levites. III. He exhorts them to love and fear God; to rebel no more againſt him; and to do good to all that are in affliction and diſtreſs, and even to ſtrangers.

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REFLECTIONS.

I. IN the first part of this chapter we find, that when the wrath of God was appeased by the humiliation of the *Israelites*, and by the intercession of *Moses*, he restored to them the tables of the law, renewed his covenant with them, and settled the priesthood and his service among them. The intercession of good men, and the repentance of sinners, appease the wrath of God, and engage him to renew his love to men, and do them good. II. The second part of this chapter contains many beautiful exhortations, and particularly this: *O Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, and to serve him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, keeping his commandments and his statutes which I give thee this day for thy good?* These words teach us, that the end which God proposes to himself in all that he does for men, and what he requires from us, above all things, is, that we should love him with all our heart, and with all our strength; that we should fear him, walk in his ways, and love all men without exception. This too is the end and design, and the sum of all religion, and of our whole duty, as our Lord *Jesus Christ* has declared in the gospel.

CHAP. XI.

I. MOSES continues to exhort the *Jews* to love and fear God; and to engage them to it, he puts them in mind of their deliverance out of *Egypt*, and of what had happened to them in the wilderness. II. He speaks to them of the fruitfulness of the land of *Canaan*; and promises them, that if they would obey the laws of the Lord, God would bless them in it; threatning them, on the con-

trary, with his wrath if they were diſobedient. III. He charges them to have his law always before their eyes, and to teach it carefully to their children. Laſtly, He ſets before them the bleſſing and the curſe of God; and orders them, when they were come into the land of *Canaan*, that they ſhould pronounce the bleſſings from mount *Gerizim*, and the curſes from mount *Ebal*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE deſign of this chapter, as well as of the former, is to induce the children of *Iſrael* to love and obey God, from the conſideration of thoſe deliverances that he had wrought for them, and of the puniſhments he had inflicted upon the rebellious in the deſert; by the hopes of thoſe bleſſings he would beſtow on them in the land of *Canaan*; and by the fear of his wrath. If the *Jews* had reaſon to be affected with theſe motives, the conſideration of the great deliverance that *Jeſus Chriſt* has obtained for us, the hope of the joys of heaven, and the fear of the puniſhments of the next life, ſhould affect us yet more, and incline us more ſtrongly to love God and keep his commandments. II. What *Moſes* ſays in this chapter, in a very particular manner engages parents to inſtruct their children in the law of God, and to make it the ſubject of their frequent and ordinary converſation with them. The repeated commands of this nature, ſhew that this duty is of the utmoſt importance. Laſtly, We ſhould take particular notice of theſe words of *Moſes*: *Behold, I ſet before you this day a bleſſing and a curſe: a bleſſing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, and a curſe, if you will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aſide out of the way which I command you this day.* The goſpel does alſo ſet before us bleſſings and curſes; bleſſings much more excellent, and curſes more dread-

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ful than thoſe propoſed to the *Jews* by *Moſes*; which ſhould be a more powerful inducement to love and obey God, as he has commanded.

CHAP. XII.

I. MOSES commands the *Jews* to root out idolatry from the land of *Canaan*. II. He informs them, that when they were come into that land, God would chooſe a place where they might ſerve him with greater regularity than they could do in the wilderneſs; and forbids them to offer ſacrifices or oblations any where but in the place that he ſhould chooſe. III. He forbids the eating of blood, and imitating the *Canaanites* in their ſuperſtitions and idolatries.

REFLECTIONS.

THE deſign of theſe laws was, to hinder the *Jews* from falling into idolatry, and the other ſins of the *Canaanites*; to oblige them to ſerve God in the place and in the manner he had appointed; to take care for the maintenance of the Levites; and to ſhew their gratitude to him, by ſacrifices, tithes, and other oblations. Chriſtians may learn from hence, I. That God can be pleaſed with no other ſervice than that which he himſelf has preſcribed; and that we ought by no means to depart from it. II. That we ought not only to abominate all kinds of idolatry and ſuperſtition, but likewiſe to avoid all evil cuſtoms and evil examples; ſince it would not be leſs dangerous or leſs criminal to imitate men of corrupt lives in their manner of living, than to conform to the ſuperſtitious and idolatrous in their falſe worſhip.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

MOSES commands, that thoſe falſe prophets ſhould be put to death, who endeavoured to turn away the people from the ſervice of the true God; and orders the ſame puniſhment to be inflicted on private perſons, and even againſt cities, that ſhould tempt the people of *Iſrael* to idolatry.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT is ſaid in this chapter muſt be underſtood thus: If God, to try the *Jews*, ſhould ſuffer impoſtors to ariſe and do falſe miracles, or extraordinary actions which might be looked upon as miracles, they were not to pay any regard to thoſe ſigns and miracles; but to conſider all thoſe as ſeducers, who ſhould attempt to draw them away to the worſhip of other gods; which was a ſufficient proof that they were falſe prophets.

II. It muſt be conſidered that the law, which ordered thoſe to be put to death, whether private perſons, or the inhabitants of any city in general, who ſhould intice the people to idolatry, ought not now to be obſerved, becauſe it was founded upon the particular ſtate and conſtitution of the people of *Iſrael*, who had God for their king and ſupreme magiſtrate; ſo that they could not introduce idolatry, without rebelling againſt him, and ſubverting that form of government which he had eſtabliſhed. So that what is ſaid in this chapter by no means proves that idolators ſhould now be put to death, or thoſe who err from the truth, when the error does not concern the public happineſs, nor diſturb the order which ought to reign in ſocieties. However, it appears from hence, that idolatry is a crime that cannot be ſufficiently deteſted;

that we ſhould oppoſe ſuch as draw away others into error and wickedneſs, by all poſſible and juſt means; and that we ought not to countenance wickedneſs in any reſpect, not even in our neareſt relations. But if we ought not to make uſe of force and torment againſt idolators, or any others that are in error; the church ought to make uſe of inſtruction and diſcipline, and the other means that *Jeſus Chriſt* has put into her hands, to hinder the ſpreading of falſe doctrines, to prevent ſcandals, to bring back ſuch as are the authors of them, and to exclude them from the communion of *Jeſus Chriſt*, if they are incorrigible.

CHAP. XIV.

I. GOD commands the *Jews* to be moderate in their mourning. II. He repeats the law concerning the diſtinction between clean and unclean beaſts. III. He orders, that beſides the tithes which the *Jews* were to pay to the Levites, they ſhould bring the ſecond tithes into the tabernacle; allowing, however, thoſe that were far off, to turn them into money: but in the third year, the *Jews* applied thoſe tithes to the Levites, and to the poor, in the places of their habitations.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are here to make three reflections: I. That if God forbad the *Jews* to afflict themſelves for the dead, after the manner of idolators; Chriſtians ought much leſs to be exceſſive in their mourning, or be ſorry *as men without hope*. II. The reaſons for the law concerning clean and unclean beaſts, were taken notice of in the reflections on the eleventh chapter of *Leviticus*. As this diſtinction between clean and unclean beaſts, is now abo-

abolished, the gospel teaching that no creature is to be accounted unclean; we may make use of all the creatures of God, provided it be with sobriety and thankfulness, and in such a manner as may give just offence to none; always exactly following the rules of temperance and Christian prudence. III. The frequent repetition of that law, which obliged the *Jews* to pay their tithes to the Levites, and to pay even the second tithes, shews, that it is the will of God that the ministers of religion, as well as the poor and needy, should be maintained; and that every one should contribute liberally, and to the utmost of his power.

CHAP. XV.

I. GOD forbids the *Jews* to exact any debts of their countrymen in the year of release, which was every seventh year. II. Upon this occasion he recommends the poor to them; and orders how servants and slaves should be treated that year. III. He repeats the law concerning the first-born of beasts.

REFLECTIONS.

THE design of the almighty in the law which obliged the *Jews* to take nothing from their brethren in the year of release, and to make their servants free, unless they were desirous to continue in their master's service; was to put the *Israelites* in mind that they had been slaves in *Egypt*, and that they were all equally God's servants, and that the rich should not oppress the poor, nor bring them into slavery. If the *Jews* were bound to the observance of this law, Christians are under a stricter obligation to treat their servants with equity and gentleness, and not to be too severe in exacting debts from

from thoſe in neceſſity. In this chapter God does likewiſe moſt expreſsly command to take great care of the poor, and never to forſake them; and forbids in a particular manner giving way to diſtruſt, or any ſuggeſtions of ſelf-intereſt, which might incline us to neglect the duties here preſcribed. He declares it is a crying ſin to oppreſs them, or to leave them deſtitute of help; but that he will pour down his bleſſings upon thoſe who have compaſſion on the miſerable. Theſe are powerful motives to a liberal and chearful exerciſe of charity. The *Jews* were forbid to make uſe of the firſtlings of their cattle, becauſe they were to be dedicated to God.

CHAP. XVI.

THIS chapter makes mention, I. Of the feaſts of the paſſover, pentecoſt, and of tabernacles. II. Of the appointment and duty of judges and magiſtrates. III. In order to prevent idolatry, God forbids the planting of trees near the altars in thoſe places where he was to be worſhipped, as the idolators did in the places where they ſerved their idols.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE reaſons why the feaſts of the *Jews* were appointed, have been already noted more than once. Let it be conſidered further, that if it pleaſed God the *Jews* ſhould obſerve certain feaſts, in memory of the great things he had done for their nation; Chriſtians, who have received infinitely greater mercies from him, ought to celebrate the remembrance of them with greater zeal and devotion, not only at ſeaſons appointed for that purpoſe, but at all times, and in all their ways; ſince the life of a Chriſtian ought to be wholly dedicated to the

the glory of God and his ſervice. II. This chapter proves, that judges and magiſtrates are of divine appointment; and that ſuch as take thoſe employments upon them, ought to do juſtice exactly and impartially, to take no bribe, nor have reſpect of perſons. III. God's forbidding the *Jews* to plant groves, and make images after the manner of idolators, ſhews, that it is not ſufficient to avoid idolatry, but that we muſt ſhun every thing that comes near it, or which might be to ourſelves or others an occaſion of ſin or ſcandal.

CHAP. XVII.

I. GOD commands that thoſe *Iſraelites* who worſhipped idols ſhould be put to death. II. That in the deciſion of doubtful caſes, the prieſts ſhould be conſulted, and their judgment followed. Laſtly, He directs the manner of eſtabliſhing kings, and ſhews their duty both in civil and religious matters.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter furniſhes us with theſe three conſiderations. I. That the law which commanded to put idolators to death, does not reſpect Chriſtians, nor are we to conclude from thence that we ought to make uſe of ſeverity and torments towards thoſe who are in error; but that, however, we ought to oppoſe thoſe who might draw us away from the true ſervice of God, and from the obedience we owe to him; that thoſe ought to be looked upon as ſeducers, and cut off from the communion of the church, by the exerciſe of diſcipline, as St. *Paul* directs in the firſt epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, chapter the fifth; where he applies to this purpoſe theſe words of *Moſes*, *Put away the wicked*

wicked from among you. II. The ſecond conſideration relates to that law which obliged the *Jews* to ſubmit to the judgment of the prieſts, upon pain of death to thoſe who refuſed to obey him. It muſt be remembered, that this law did not concern articles of faith, nor the doctrines of religion, ſince God himſelf had in his word ſo determined every thing that was to be believed and done in that reſpect, that no one durſt in the leaſt depart from that rule. But this law related to civil cauſes, in which it was neceſſary to ſubmit to the prieſts, or to the judge who had authority to determine law-ſuits; which muſt have been endleſs, if private perſons might, with impunity, have rebelled againſt thoſe whom God himſelf had appointed to determine them. And thus ought we at this day to ſubmit to judges and magiſtrates, and obey in the Lord our temporal and ſpiritual guides. Laſtly, This chapter teaches us, that kings and magiſtrates ought not to think they have a right to exalt themſelves above their brethren, to heap up riches, to live deliciouſly, or to oppreſs the people; but that their duty is to live within the bounds of moderation and humility; to govern the people with juſtice; and above all, carefully to read the law of God, to have it always before their eyes, and to conform themſelves ſtrictly to it.

CHAP. XVIII.

I. GOD regulates the portion which the prieſts and Levites, who miniſtred, were to have of the ſacrifices and other oblations. II. He forbids them to imitate the ſuperſtitions of the *Canaanites*, and particularly, the conſulting thoſe that uſed divination. III. He promiſes to inſtruct his people by ſending them prophets, and above all, by ſending a great prophet, to whom it would be their duty to hearken. IV. Laſtly,

IV. Laſtly, He gives directions how they ſhould diſtinguiſh between true and falſe prophets.

REFLECTIONS.

I. ST. *Paul* teaches us, that the law which regulates the dues of the prieſts in the offerings of the people, proves that it has always been the will of God, that thoſe who ſerve in the ſacred miniſtry of the church, ſhould be maintained by the church. II. We may likewiſe obſerve here, that it is a great ſin to conſult thoſe that pretend to divination, to make uſe of charms, and other ſuperſtitious rites; and that theſe crimes ought not to be ſuffered among thoſe that know the true God. III. We find in this chapter a remarkable prophecy, which in the New Teſtament is applied to *Jeſus Chriſt*; that prophecy, in which God promiſed to ſend a great prophet, who was to make known to men the will of God, and to whom alone we ought to hearken. IV. The command given by God, not to liſten to falſe prophets, ſhews us, that we muſt not believe that all thoſe who ſay they are ſent from God, are ſo; but that God would have us try theſe teachers and their doctrines, by the teſt which he has given in his word. This too is what Chriſt and his apoſtles have particularly required of all Chriſtians.

CHAP. XIX.

THIS chapter contains, I. The laws concerning the cities of refuge, and the manner of proceeding in the caſe of wilful or accidental murder. II. Thoſe concerning the boundaries of poſſeſſions; and the puniſhment of falſe witneſſes.

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REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from this chapter, I. That if God appointed cities of refuge for thoſe who had killed any one innocently, and without malice or any evil intention, he would not have us let go unpuniſhed, upon any pretence whatever, thoſe who have been guilty of wilful murder. Therefore, magiſtrates and judges ought to make a ſtrict enquiry into, and ſeverely puniſh this ſin, if they would not draw upon themſelves and upon their people the divine vengeance. II. This chapter teaches us, that it is a crying inſtance of injuſtice to remove landmarks. III. The third reflection relates to witneſſes. It is God's will that we ſhould have recourſe to witneſſes, when the truth cannot otherwiſe be known; and he orders, that falſe witneſſes ſhould ſuffer the ſame puniſhment as would have been inflicted upon the perſon againſt whom they bore falſe witneſs. This law proves the authority that judges and magiſtrates have, by the law of God, to make uſe of witneſſes, and to examine them upon oath, in order to diſcover the truth, which thoſe that are ſummoned as witneſſes are obliged to declare, that thoſe who are found to be falſe witneſſes deſerve the moſt exemplary puniſhment; and that if they eſcape puniſhment from men, God will take vengeance of their perfidiouſneſs and impiety.

CHAP. XX.

THIS chapter contains the military laws. We obſerve here, the prieſt's exhortation to the people when they were going to war; and how the people were to uſe the cities they beſieged.

REFLECTIONS.

THE military laws contained in this chapter, deſerve our obſervation. The prieſt's exhortation to the people, when they were going to war, tended to inform them, that they could not overcome their enemies without the divine aſſiſtance. We may from hence conclude, that God, who governs all things, is the giver of victory; and that, when wars are juſt and lawful, we may be ſecure of his protection. That law by which certain perſons were excuſed from going to war, was made becauſe it would have been hard and unreaſonable for them to be deprived of thoſe advantages which they had propoſed to themſelves, and for others to enjoy them; and becauſe it was to be feared, that ſuch perſons, going to war againſt their will, might want courage. We next obſerve, that it was the will of God that war ſhould be carried on with moderation and temper, ſparing, as much as poſſible, the innocent. If the *Jews* were obliged to behave with this temper and moderation in their wars; much more ought Chriſtians to uſe the ſame moderation, eſpecially towards one another, and ſhew upon all occaſions, that they are animated with the ſpirit of *Jeſus Chriſt*, which is the ſpirit of meekneſs and charity.

CHAP. XXI.

IN this chapter, God regulates, I. The manner of atoning for murder, when he that committed it could not be found. II. Marriages with captives. III. The rights of the firſt-born. IV. The puniſhment of thoſe that rebel againſt their parents. And laſtly, The burial of criminals executed by the hand of juſtice.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THE ceremonies that were to be obſerved in atoning for murder, where the author could not be found, and the prayer and ſolemn proteſtation which the magiſtrates were to pronounce upon that occaſion, ſhew plainly, that judges cannot be too ſtrict in diſcovering and puniſhing murderers, and that God will call them to an account if they neglect it. The laws concerning marriages with captives, and the right of the firſt-born, were intended to prevent the *Iſraelites* from giving a looſe to their paſſions and humours, and to maintain juſtice and order in families. The law, which commands rebellious children to be put to death, expreſſes the heinouſneſs of that ſin, and ſhould make all children who are guilty of this ſin fear the curſe of God. Laſtly, What God preſcribes about criminals that were put to death, was deſigned to prevent their dead bodies from being devoured by beaſts, or ſtinking above ground, which would have looked like barbarity, and have created horror. Upon this occaſion we ſhould reflect upon the profound humiliation of *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, who was nailed to the croſs. This is St. *Paul*'s reflection in the third chapter of the epiſtle to the *Galatians*, where it is ſaid, *Chriſt redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us: for it is written, Curſed is he that hangeth on a tree.*

CHAP. XXII.

THE laws contained in this chapter relate to things found; to modeſty in apparel; to kindneſs, even towards beaſts; to buildings; to the mixture of divers kinds; and to the puniſhment of married and ſingle perſons that are guilty of uncleanneſs.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE ſeveral laws teach us, I. That we are obliged honeſtly to reſtore to the owner any thing that we ſhall find. II. The law which forbids the taking in a bird's neſt both the dam and the young ones, was given to teach the *Jews* humanity and tenderneſs. III. God forbids men and women to diſguiſe themſelves, and change the dreſs peculiar to their ſex, as the idolators did; becauſe it was inconſiſtent with the rules of decency and modeſty, and might introduce licentiouſneſs and impurity. IV. God commanded them to make battlements to the roofs of their houſes, becauſe their roofs were flat, and perſons might otherwiſe have fallen from them. V. He forbad the mixture of divers kinds, to keep the *Iſraelites* at the greater diſtance from impurity and ſome idolatrous cuſtoms. VI. The bands and fringes which the *Jews* wore upon their garments, and which diſtinguiſhed them from other nations, were deſigned to put them in mind that they were the people of God, and were to keep his law. Laſtly, Every one ought to take particular notice of the puniſhments that God had appointed againſt ſingle and married perſons, who ſhould be guilty of the ſin of uncleanneſs; which proves that not only adultery, but ſimple fornication too, are great ſins; that thoſe who are guilty of them ought to be puniſhed; and that they are obliged to make reparation by marriage, and all other poſſible means, for the evil they have done; which, added to the conſideration of the puniſhments denounced againſt the unclean, ought to keep us from thoſe infamous ſins, and oblige us to live in great chaſtity.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

THE laws in this chapter relate, I. To certain perſons who might not be received into the congregation of the Lord, nor put into any poſts of civil power. II. To the cleanlineſs that was to be obſerved in the camp of the children of *Iſrael* when they went out to war. III. To fugitive ſlaves, impurity, and proſtitution; to uſury and vows; and laſtly, to what it was, or was not lawful to take, in the poſſeſſions of others.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may collect from this chapter, I. That if God, for particular reaſons, excluded from the congregation of *Iſrael* thoſe who had ſome defects in their perſon or their birth; thoſe who are fallen into the pollutions of vice, ought much leſs to be eſteemed members of the Chriſtian church, nor will God receive ſuch into his kingdom. II. A like reflection may be made upon that law which required cleanlineſs in the camp, becauſe God was in the midſt of them: True purity, which is that of the heart and life, is much more neceſſary; and the conſideration of the divine preſence, obliges us ſtill more ſtrongly to take heed, that the Lord behold in us no unclean thing which may offend him. If God would have uncleanneſs and impurity baniſhed from among the *Jews*, he muſt eſteem it ſtill more odious in Chriſtians. III. The command not to deliver up a fugitive ſlave, reſpected the ſlaves of the neighbouring nations, who were treated with great cruelty and barbarity, and came to ſeek for refuge in the land of *Iſrael*, and were minded to dwell there. IV. The law which forbad the *Jews* to lend upon uſury to

their brethren, but permitted them to take intereſt of ſtrangers, was peculiar to the *Jews*. The duty of Chriſtians in this reſpect is never to lend upon uſury, to be juſt and equitable, and to exact the payment of what is lent with great moderation. With reſpect to vows, we are at liberty to make them, or not make them; but when we have made a vow, we are no longer at liberty whether we will accompliſh it or no, unleſs the object of it be ſomething unlawful. Laſtly, The law which permitted them to pluck the ears of corn or the grapes in their neighbour's poſſeſſions, to ſatisfy their hunger, but forbad the carrying any part thereof away, tended, on one hand, to keep the *Jews* from covetouſneſs, and too great an attachment to their own private intereſt, and on the other, to keep them from theft and injuſtice; and to prevent them, upon pretence that they were allowed to make uſe of what belonged to another, from abuſing that liberty, and doing miſchief to their neighbour's goods.

CHAP. XXIV.

LAWS concerning divorces; the privileges of new-married people; the manner of taking pledges, and exacting the payment of debts; the puniſhment of men-ſtealers; concerning lepers; the wages of labourers; equity in judgments; and the care that was to be taken of the poor in the time of harveſt.

REFLECTIONS.

UPON the law of divorces, we muſt obſerve, that it did not authorize all thoſe diſorders which were introduced among the *Jews* afterwards; ſince God permitted divorce only when the woman had been guilty of ſomething infamous and diſhoneſt.

But

But we muſt remember what our Lord ſays in the goſpel, that divorces were tolerated among the *Jews* by reaſon of the hardneſs of their hearts, but that they are no longer ſo among Chriſtians, and that the bond of marriage cannot be diſſolved. Next we learn, that we ſhould not be rigorous in taking pledges, or when we make poor perſons pay their debts due to us; that we ſhould pay readily and honeſtly the wages of the hireling, and that it is a crying ſin to withhold them; that we ought to uſe with kindneſs, as well as juſtice, ſtrangers, widows and orphans. Laſtly, The prohibition that God made the *Jews*, of gleaning their vineyards and their fields, was to teach them to avoid covetouſneſs and a baſe attachment to their intereſt; and it teaches us, that God would have us remember the poor in the time of harveſt, and to exerciſe charity towards them upon all occaſions.

CHAP. XXV.

GOD commands the *Jews* to uſe moderation in the puniſhment of the guilty; forbids them to muzzle the ox that treads out the corn, commands that when a man dies without children his brother ſhould marry his widow, to keep up the name of the deceaſed; he alſo commands them to uſe juſt weights and meaſures. And laſtly, He orders them to deſtroy the *Amalekites*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we learn, I. That magiſtrates ought to pronounce juſt judgment, and puniſh the guilty with humanity and moderation. II. The law which forbids to muzzle the ox which treads the corn, was given to teach the *Jews* equity and tenderneſs; and to ſhew, that we ought to provide a maintenance for thoſe who labour for the good of others, as

St. *Paul* ſays in the ninth chapter of the firſt epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, where he quotes this law to prove, that they who preach the goſpel have a right to receive from the church what is neceſſary for their proviſion and ſupport. III. That other law which required, that, when a man died without children, his brother ſhould marry the widow, was peculiar to the *Jews*; and was deſigned to keep up the diſtinction of families; and preſerve the right of inheritance. IV. We ſee here, that thoſe who are guilty of cheating, and eſpecially thoſe that uſe fraud and deceit in weights and meaſures, are an abomination to the Lord. Laſtly, The command given by God to deſtroy the *Amalekites*, who had unjuſtly fallen upon the children of *Iſrael*, muſt be conſidered as a juſt puniſhment inflicted upon that people; and ſhews us, that pride, cruelty and injuſtice, are diſpleaſing in the ſight of God, and expoſe whole nations, as well as private perſons, to his wrath.

CHAP. XXVI.

I. HERE *Moſes* preſcribes the ceremonies that were to be obſerved by the *Iſraelites*, when they offered their firſt-fruits to God, and when they gave the tithes of the third year to the Levites, and to the poor. II. *Moſes* having ſet before them all theſe laws, exhorts the people to obſerve them, and to fulfil the promiſes which they then ſo ſolemnly made to obey the voice of God; he promiſes them, that if they did ſo, God would bleſs them, and make them the happieſt people upon the face of the earth.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reading of this chapter is very edifying and inſtructive. The prayers and ſolemn declarations

clarations made by the *Jews* when they preſented their firſt-fruits and tithes, was a ceremony expreſſing their homage to the deity, and a grateful acknowledgement that to him they were accountable for all the fruits which their country produced. As they did, ſo ſhould we pay homage to God for all the good things we poſſeſs, acknowledging our own unworthineſs, and confeſſing that we receive all things from his bountiful hand. This ceremony of offering the firſt-fruits proves further, that God would have us expreſs our piety and our gratitude by ſetting apart ſome portion of our eſtates, and offering it to him in humility; whether it be for his ſervice, or for the ſupport of the poor; taking care never to apply any part of our ſubſtance to ſinful purpoſes, to provoke the God who gave them. We learn at the end of this chapter, that when the *Iſraelites* had ſolemnly promiſed to keep all the commandments of the Lord, and to walk in his ways, God alſo aſſured them they ſhould be his peculiar people. We are obliged to obſerve all that God commands; but when we have made ſolemn vows and promiſes to do it, the obligation becomes ſtill more indiſpenſible; and it is by the practice of theſe juſt duties, that we can expect to ſecure to ourſelves the favour of God and his bleſſing.

CHAP. XXVII.

I. GOD commands the *Iſraelites* to ſet up great ſtones upon mount *Ebal*, to engrave upon them the words of the law, to raiſe an altar there, and to offer ſacrifices thereon. II. He orders them to pronounce the bleſſings from mount *Gerizim*, and the curſes from mount *Ebal*; to which all the people were to anſwer, *Amen*.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter is very remarkable for the bleſſings and curſes which God commanded to be pronounced with ſo great ſolemnity, in the preſence, and with the conſent, of all the people of *Iſrael*. This grave and ſolemn ceremony, leaves no room to doubt, but thoſe who keep God's commandments are the objects of his favour and benediction; and that thoſe who tranſgreſs them are accurſed, and expoſed to the divine vengeance. God thought fit thoſe abominable crimes which are here ſet down, all of them crimes of the moſt heinous nature, and eſpecially thoſe of uncleanneſs, ſhould be particularly mentioned, becauſe they were common among the *Canaanites*, and were the very reaſon why God was going to deſtroy them; but let it be remembered, that other ſins do no leſs expoſe us to the wrath of God. It is likewiſe to be obſerved, that theſe curſes were denounced againſt thoſe who committed theſe ſins even in ſecret. Laſtly, We ſhould ſeriouſly conſider, that, how terrible ſoever thoſe curſes were which were pronounced from mount *Ebal*, thoſe denounced in the goſpel are much more ſo; and that if the *Jews* ſubmitted themſelves to the wrath of God by anſwering *Amen* to every curſe, we have likewiſe expoſed ourſelves to it, by the vows we have made to God as Chriſtians; and that therefore we ſhall not eſcape his judgment, if we break thoſe vows by our diſobedience.

CHAP. XXVIII. 1——44.

MOSES having made an end of repeating and declaring to the people the laws of the Lord, promiſes them plenty, peace, and all ſorts of bleſſings, if they obeyed God's commandments; and on the contrary,

contrary, threatens them with dearth, ſickneſs, and war, and all the moſt dreadful miſeries, if they fell into rebellion and diſobedience.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is to be remarked in general on this chapter, I. That theſe temporal bleſſings and curſes were ſuited to the ſtate of the *Jewiſh* nation. II. That the curſes are not mere threatnings, but ſo many expreſs and formal predictions of the miſeries that befel that people at different times, when they fell into diſobedience and idolatry; God having viſited them with barrenneſs, drought, famine, peſtilence, and the ſword, and with other ſcourges, as the ſacred hiſtory informs us. III. Though theſe bleſſings and theſe curſes related to the *Jewiſh* nation in particular, we ought moſt ſeriouſly to reflect upon them, and conſider, that God bleſſes thoſe that fear him, and puniſhes thoſe that offend him, and abuſe his goodneſs; that being Lord of all creatures, he makes them ſubſervient to the welfare of his people; but that he afflicts and ſcourges the wicked; that war, famine, dearth, peſtilence, diſeaſes, and all other calamities, proceed from God; and that he frequently makes uſe of them to puniſh the iniquity and ingratitude of men. Laſtly, We are to conſider, that temporal bleſſings and curſes are not thoſe which ſhould moſt affect us; but that as Chriſtians we ſhould ſerve and obey God in hopes of thoſe rewards, and for fear of thoſe puniſhments, that reſpect the life to come.

CHAP. XXVIII. 45——68.

THIS is a continuation of the curſes denounced by *Moſes* againſt the children of *Iſrael*, threatning them, that if they forſook God, they ſhould be the moſt unhappy people under heaven; that God would

would deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and that they ſhould be driven out of their country, and diſperſed throughout all the world.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS is one of the moſt remarkable paſſages in the Books of *Moſes:* it preſents us with a moſt exact deſcription of the evils that afterwards befel the *Jews*, when they were delivered by God into the hand of their enemies; and in particular, when the ten tribes were diſperſed by the king of *Aſſyria*; when *Jeruſalem* was taken by the *Babylonians*, and the *Jews* carried away into captivity, and a great number of them retired into ſeveral parts of *Egypt*, and there periſhed in a miſerable manner; and laſtly, when the *Romans* deſtroyed their city and temple. We ſee here deſcribed the extremities to which the *Jews* would afterwards be reduced by famine; which was to be ſo great, that mothers would eat their own children; which came to paſs in the ſiege of *Samaria* and *Jeruſalem*. *Moſes* foretels likewiſe the captivity of that nation; its diſperſion over the world, and the ſad condition in which it continues to this day. Theſe predictions, the antiquity of which is inconteſtible, and acknowledged by all, cannot be ſufficiently admired; ſince they deſcribe, ſo long before, what was to happen to the *Jews* after ſo many ages. Theſe predictions prove, in the cleareſt and moſt expreſs manner, the divinity of the writings of *Moſes*; and ought to inſpire us with a great fear of offending the Lord, leſt we ſhould incur thoſe puniſhments and curſes that are denounced in the goſpel; and which are neither leſs certain, nor leſs dreadful, than thoſe of the law.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIX.

I. MOSES repreſents to the *Jews*, in a moſt affecting manner, the favours which God had ſhewn them. II. He renews the covenant between God and them. III. He ſolemnly proteſts, that if they broke it God would pour down upon them his moſt heavy judgments, and would make them an example to all the nations of the earth. This chapter, as well as the foregoing, deſerves our ſerious attention.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter repreſents how *Moſes* before his death renewed the covenant between God and the children of *Iſrael*, and their poſterity, exhorting them to keep it faithfully; and threatning them with total deſtruction, and the curſe of God to fall upon them all, if they ſhould break the vow and covenant which they then made. Theſe weighty exhortations ſhould make the greater impreſſion upon us, as we know the *Iſraelites* actually fell into rebellion, and God fulfilled on them all the threatnings which *Moſes* had denounced againſt them; that nation being driven out of the land of *Canaan*, and that country made a deſolation and a curſe. This engages us to remember, that God has been more gracious to us than he was to the *Jews*; that he has made with us a much more holy and more excellent covenant in *Jeſus Chriſt*; that all of us have ſolemnly obliged ourſelves to keep that covenant; and therefore if we ſhould happen to fail in our duty, and in our promiſes, nothing can ſkreen us from the puniſhment which God has ſo expreſsly denounced, and to which we have alſo made ourſelves ſubject.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXX.

THIS chapter has three parts: I. *Moſes* promiſes the *Jews*, that if they would humble themſelves under God's corrections, he would pardon them. II. He tells them, that it was very eaſy for them to keep the law of God, ſince he had ſo clearly revealed it to them, and they had all neceſſary aſſiſtance to enable them to perform it. III. He calls upon them again to love and fear God, ſolemnly proteſting, that if they ſhould forſake him they would periſh moſt miſerably and moſt juſtly.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter includes the following inſtructions: I. The promiſes God made the *Jews* of reſtoring them to his favour when they ſhould turn again to him, ſhew, that God is full of goodneſs; that when he afflicts us, it is in order to humble us, and bring us to repentance; and that he is always ready to receive into the arms of his mercy, thoſe ſinners that make a right uſe of his corrections, and truly turn to him. Theſe promiſes were fulfilled when God brought the *Jews* back from their captivity in *Babylon*; but they will be more fully compleated when that nation, which ſtill ſubſiſts, ſhall be converted. II. We learn from this chapter, that the law of God is very eaſy to be underſtood and practiſed; and that therefore we ſhall be without excuſe if we break it. This is expreſſed in theſe words of *Moſes*, which St. *Paul* applies to the goſpel, in the tenth chapter to the *Romans*: *This commandment is not too high for thee, nor too far from thee; but it is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart.* III. We ſhould moſt attentively conſider that ſerious

and

and ſolemn proteſtation of *Moſes*, expreſſed in theſe words; *If thine heart turn away, ſo that thou wilt not hear, nor obey the commandments of God; I declare unto you, that ye ſhall ſurely periſh. I call heaven and earth to record againſt you this day, that I have ſet before you life and death, bleſſing and curſing: therefore chooſe life, that both thou and thy ſeed may live; that thou mayſt love the Lord thy God, and cleave unto him, for he is thy life and the length of thy days.* Nothing can be more expreſſive nor more affecting than theſe words of *Moſes*. Thus does God, to engage men to love and fear him, give them warning of their danger, and ſet before them good and evil. It is therefore their own fault if they are not happy, and do not enjoy the effects of his love, and if they periſh they are the authors of their own ruin and deſtruction.

CHAP. XXXI.

I. MOSES promiſes the *Jews* the poſſeſſion of the land of *Canaan*, and confirms *Joſhua* in his calling. II. He ordains, that every ſeventh year the law ſhould be read in the preſence of all the people. III. God acquaints *Moſes*, that after his death the children of *Iſrael* would rebel againſt him; and that then he ſhould execute his threatnings againſt them. IV. He commands him to write a ſong, which might be a memorial of this prediction, to put it with the book of the law in the ſide of the ark of the covenant, and pronounce it publicly before all the tribes of *Iſrael*, who were aſſembled together to hear it.

REFLECTIONS.

I. MOSES, before his death, repeated the promiſes he had made to the children of *Iſrael*,

rael, aſſuring them again that they ſhould enter into the land of *Canaan*, and that *Joſhua* ſhould bring them into it. This he did to encourage the people, and engage them to fear God. II. The command God gave to *Moſes* to write the law, and to order the prieſts to keep it, and to read it before all the people, men, women, and children, and even ſtrangers, that they might learn to fear God, clearly proves, that it was neceſſary the word of God ſhould be committed to writing; that it was deſigned by God to be read to the people, and that it is the duty of the miniſters of religion, to communicate the knowledge of it to perſons of every age, ſex and condition, that the true ſervice of God may be preſerved free from any alteration. III. The predictions of *Moſes* before his death, that the people of *Iſrael* would forſake God, and his ſolemn proteſtation againſt them in the ſong which he ſung and left in writing, are an evident proof that God knows things to come, and that *Moſes* was divinely inſpired; eſpecially if we conſider, that all that this prophet foretold of the *Jews* has come to paſs. This likewiſe leads us to conſider, that thoſe whom God has enlightened with his knowledge, and to whom he has ſhewn the greateſt favour, do often corrupt his true worſhip, and rebel againſt him; but that he never ſuffers the diſobedience and ingratitude of thoſe who thus abuſe his goodneſs, to eſcape unpuniſhed.

CHAP. XXXII. 1——18.

THIS is the firſt part of the ſong of *Moſes*; in which he deſcribes, in figurative expreſſions, I. The mercies of the Lord to the children of *Iſrael*. II. The ſins with which they had provoked, and would afterwards provoke, the Lord to anger.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS excellent ſong, which *Moſes* ſpake and wrote by the inſpiration of the holy Spirit, as a ſolemn proteſtation to the *Jews* in after ages, and which will be, to the end of the world, an authentic proof of the divinity of the holy ſcriptures, ought likewiſe to ſerve for a warning to us. To this end we ſhould conſider, that if God expreſſed his great love to the *Jews* by ſeparating them from other nations to be his peculiar people, and by granting them many ſignal mercies and deliverances, he has done much more for us than all this, in chooſing us to be members of his church, and in pouring upon us his moſt valuable bleſſings in *Chriſt Jeſus*. What is here ſaid of the diſobedience and ingratitude of the *Jews*, warns us not to make ungrateful returns to the goodneſs of the Lord; to uſe all the temporal and ſpiritual advantages we enjoy to his glory; but never to abuſe his mercies as the *Jews* did, for fear of moving him to jealouſy, and drawing upon ourſelves the effects of his juſt vengeance.

CHAP. XXXII. 19—52.

THIS is the ſequel of the ſong of *Moſes*, in which he foretels, that God would cauſe his judgments to fall upon the *Jews*, by reaſon of their idolatry and other ſins; that he would ſcatter them over all the earth; that the Gentiles ſhould be called in their ſtead; that he would not entirely deſtroy the *Jews*, but would one day bring them back from their diſperſion. *Moſes* having finiſhed this ſong, gives the people his laſt exhortations, and then, by God's order, goes up to mount *Nebo*, where he was to die.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are here ſeveral things to be obſerved: I. *Moſes* declares, that for the puniſhment of the ſins of the *Jews*, God would deliver them to their enemies and diſperſe them among the ſeveral nations of the world, and receive the Gentiles into covenant. The hiſtory of this people, and the condition they are in at this day, proves the truth of all that *Moſes* had foretold, and ſhews, that when men provoke God's wrath, his threatnings are infallibly executed; and that thoſe he has moſt loved, are moſt ſeverely puniſhed. II. *Moſes* foretels in this ſong, that God would not entirely caſt off his people; that he would again have pity on them, and diſplay his power one day to all the world by their reſtoration. This happened when God delivered the *Jews* from the *Babyloniſh* captivity, and will be more completely fulfilled when they ſhall again be admitted into covenant with God. Laſtly, The exhortations ſet down at the end of this chapter, ſhould induce us to hearken diligently, and with reverential fear, to the laws of God, to have them always preſent to our minds, to teach them to our children, and to obſerve them inviolably; remembering that God gave them for our good and happineſs, and that, as he ſays by *Moſes*, the word which is ſpoken to us is not in vain; that it is our life; and that by it we ſhall prolong our days, and be compleatly bleſſed.

CHAP. XXXIII.

THIS chapter contains the bleſſing that *Moſes* gave the tribes of *Iſrael* before his death.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

I. ON the bleſſing which *Moſes* gave the twelve tribes of *Iſrael* before his death, we obſerve in general, that this great prophet ſpoke to each of the tribes, not only with reference to what had already happened to ſome of them, but in ſuch a manner as foretold what would happen to them afterwards, the condition they would be in, and the part of the land of *Canaan* where they ſhould dwell; which proves that he ſpoke by divine inſpiration. There is no particular bleſſing for the tribe of *Simeon*, becauſe that was afterwards united with that of *Judah*, ſee *Joſhua* xix. 1, 9. 1 *Chron.* iv. 24, and following verſes. II. In this bleſſing we alſo obſerve the prophet's zeal for the glory of God, and his great love and tenderneſs for that people, whom he had taken ſuch care of all his life; which ſhould ſerve for an example to all thoſe who are ſet over others, and particularly thoſe to whom God has committed the government of his church, who ought, in imitation of *Moſes*, to labour continually for the ſalvation of their brethren, and by their devout prayers and all other poſſible means contribute towards it. III. But it is alſo to be conſidered, that how great ſoever thoſe bleſſings of *Moſes* were, and notwithſtanding the ardency of his prayers, they became vain and unprofitable, by the diſobedience of the *Jews*, who were deprived of all the advantages that *Moſes* wiſhed them before his death. From whence we may learn, that though good men, and the faithful ſervants of God, pray for men, and even God be ready to bleſs them, they may be deprived of the benefit of theſe prayers and bleſſings if by their ſins they will defeat them. Laſtly, The words

of *Moſes*, when ſpeaking to the people the laſt time, he ſays, *Happy art thou, O Iſrael; what people is like unto thee!* ought to excite in us a lively ſenſe of our own happineſs in being the people of God, in a ſtill more glorious and advantageous manner than the *Jews* were; they ſhould inſpire us with the moſt ſincere gratitude towards God, and induce us to love and fear him, and glorify him by a conſtant obedience to his commands, and by adhering inviolably to his ſervice.

CHAP. XXXIV.

THIS chapter gives an account of the death of *Moſes*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE death of *Moſes* had this particular and remarkable circumſtance, that he died in his full ſtrength: this happy old age muſt be looked upon as a peculiar bleſſing vouchſafed by God to this holy man. But the moſt remarkable circumſtance of all was, that God took him and buried him, and ſuffered not the place of his burial to be known. God thought fit this great prophet, who had ſo familiar an intercourſe with him in his life, ſhould, as *Enoch* and *Elias*, have ſomething extraordinary and different from the reſt of mankind in his death; that the children of *Iſrael* might be convinced that *Moſes* left this world to go to God, and might look upon him as his faithful ſervant. As for us, it is our duty to honour the memory of this holy man, who was the deliverer and lawgiver of the people of God, and the greateſt of prophets; and to reverence that law which he received from God, and which he has left us in writ-

ing.

ing. Beſides which, we ought to follow the example of his virtues; and particularly of his faith and meekneſs, of that zeal and diligence with which the ſcriptures teach us he ſerved God. Laſtly, if we believe the doctrine of *Moſes*, we ought to believe in him whoſe coming he foretold, and who is infinitely above him, by reaſon of the divinity of his perſon, the perfection of his doctrine, the glory of his miracles, and the holineſs of his life; to wit, our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* the Son of God, to whom belong glory and praiſe for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The end of the FIVE BOOKS *of* MOSES.

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

ARGUMENT.

In this Book we ſee how the children of Iſrael *conquered the land of* Canaan, *under the conduct of* Joſhua. *This book contains the hiſtory of about ſeventeen years.*

CHAP. I.

I. GOD confirms the calling of *Joſhua.* II. *Joſhua* orders the people to be prepared to go over the river *Jordan.* III. He commands the tribes of *Reuben*, *Gad*, and *Manaſſes*, who were already in poſſeſſion of the country that was conquered in the time of *Moſes*, to aſſiſt the other tribes in ſubduing the land of *Canaan.* The people promiſed an entire obedience to *Joſhua.*

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THIS chapter informs us, I. That after the death of *Moſes*, God choſe *Joſhua* to be head over the children of *Iſrael*, and to bring them into the land of *Canaan*; and that he inveſted him with authority, and endued him with ſtrength and wiſdom

wiſdom ſuitable to ſo great a work. From whence we may learn, that God never forſakes his church and his people; and that when he takes to himſelf his faithful ſervants, he raiſes up others in their ſtead, and endues them with the gifts of his holy ſpirit. II. The promiſe God made to *Joſhua* not to forſake him, may be applied to all true Chriſtians, as St. *Paul* teaches in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, where he ſays, that it is our duty to rely upon providence, and be content in our condition; becauſe God himſelf has ſaid, *I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee.* But our confidence in God ſhould always be attended with obedience to his laws, as is expreſsly taught in this chapter. III. The obedience paid to *Joſhua* by the tribes of *Reuben*, *Gad*, and *Manaſſes*, who aſſiſted their brethren in conquering the land of *Canaan*, ſhould teach us to ſubmit to our rulers, and to obey them; to aſſiſt one another in every juſt cauſe, and eſpecially in what regards the glory of God, and the common ſalvation.

CHAP. II.

JOSHUA ſends ſpies to *Jericho*, who lodged with a woman named *Rahab*, who concealed them, and informed them of the ſtate of the land of *Canaan*. The ſpies promiſed to ſave this woman's life; and being returned to the camp, informed *Joſhua* of all they had obſerved in their journey.

REFLECTIONS.

UPON this chapter we may make theſe two principal remarks: I. That though *Joſhua* was perſuaded God would give the land of *Canaan* to the children of *Iſrael*, yet he ſent ſpies to *Jeri-*

tho, to ſearch the land, that their relation of the condition of the country might ſerve to encourage the people of *Iſrael* to invade the land of *Canaan*, and take proper meaſures to become maſters of it. II. The ſecond reflection relates to the conduct of *Rahab*; in which it is to be obſerved, that this woman being firmly perſuaded that God had reſolved to give the land of *Canaan* to the children of *Iſrael*, ſhe might do what ſhe did innocently; otherwiſe, her behaviour towards her king and country would have been very blameable, neither ought any to imitate her in that reſpect: her example ſhould teach us to expreſs the ſincerity of our faith by our works, according to St. *James*, who ſays, that *Rahab was juſtified by works, when ſhe received the meſſengers, and ſent them out another way. For as the body without the ſpirit is dead, ſo faith without works is dead alſo.*

CHAP. III.

I. *JOSHUA* commands the children of *Iſrael* to make ready to go over *Jordan*. II. All the people paſs through the river on dry ground, the current of the waters being miraculouſly ſtopped.

REFLECTIONS.

UPON this hiſtory of the paſſage of the *Iſraelites* over *Jordan*, we muſt make the five following reflections. I. That this miracle ſerved to confirm the calling of *Joſhua*, and ſtrengthen his authority and credit among the people; ſince this was a proof that God would be with him as he had been with *Moſes*. II. That God was pleaſed to give this people freſh proofs of his preſence among them, and of his protection; and convince them, that he would aſſuredly give them the land of *Canaan*.

III. The

III. The reſemblance between this miracle and that which had happened forty years before, when the *Iſraelites* paſſed through the Red ſea, muſt needs call to their remembrance that great wonder which God had wrought for their fathers, and convince ſo much the more of the truth of that event thoſe who had not been witneſſes of it. IV. This event, which was known and muſt needs be obſerved by the inhabitants of the country, ſerved to ſpread a terror among them, and by that means to facilitate the conqueſt of that country. Laſtly, Obſerve, that as ſoon as the feet of the prieſts who bore the ark of the covenant had touched the waters of *Jordan*, they ſtopped; whereby God gave the *Iſraelites* to underſtand, that it would be only by his aſſiſtance, that they ſhould ſubdue the land of *Canaan*; and that in his preſence in the midſt of them, conſiſted all their ſtrength and all their glory.

CHAP. IV.

I. JOSHUA commands the people of *Iſrael* to ſet up two monuments in remembrance of their paſſage through *Jordan*, one in the river *Jordan* itſelf; and the other near *Gilgal*; and to inform their poſterity of this event. II. The people having paſſed that river, the waters returned to their ordinary courſe.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD commanded the children of *Iſrael* to raiſe two monuments in remembrance of their paſſage through *Jordan*, which might ſerve afterwards to perpetuate the memory of this wonderful event, and prove the truth of it. We ought likewiſe to preſerve and perpetuate the remembrance of the mercies of the Lord, and of his moſt ſignal favours, and eſpecially

eſpecially of what he has done for us in *Jeſus Chriſt* our Redeemer. Moreover, we learn from hence, that it has always been the will of God that we ſhould carefully inſtruct our children in the hiſtories and truths of religion, that by this means they may be trained up betimes to love and fear God.

CHAP. V.

THERE are four things to be obſerved in this chapter: I. The terror of the *Canaanites* at the approach of the *Iſraelites*. II. The circumciſion of the people. III. The celebration of the paſſover. IV. The viſion of an angel that appeared to *Joſhua*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE terror that ſeized upon the *Canaanites* when they heard the children of *Iſrael* had paſſed over *Jordan*, muſt be conſidered as a means made uſe of by God to intimidate them; wherein we ſee how God prepares things for the execution of his deſigns, and that he turns the hearts of men which way he pleaſes. II. It pleaſed God that the *Jews*, who had not been circumciſed in the wilderneſs, ſhould be ſo at their entrance into the land of *Canaan*; to ſhew them that they had the honour to be his people; that they had been glorioufly diſtinguiſhed from the *Egyptians*; and that he gave them that country on account of the covenant, of which circumciſion was a ſign, and upon condition they would keep that covenant. It was for the ſame reaſon they celebrated the paſſover. From whence we may learn, that it is the will of God that all his ordinances, even thoſe that relate only to external duties, ſhould be ſtrictly obſerved. III. The account we have of the manna's ceaſing to fall as ſoon as the *Iſraelites* had eat of the corn of the land of *Canaan*, ſhews,

ſhews, that the manna, which they had eat till that time, was a miraculous food ſent them from heaven, and that for the time to come the land ſhould furniſh them with the neceſſaries of life. Laſtly, The angel's appearing to *Joſhua*, was a new proof of the divine protection, and was deſigned to aſſure him, that as God had led the children of *Iſrael* by his angel in the wilderneſs, he would bring them in like manner into the land of *Canaan*, which he had promiſed them.

CHAP. VI.

THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of the taking the city of *Jericho*, in which theſe three things are to be remarked. I. The manner in which God delivered that city into the hands of the children of *Iſrael*. II. The command given to *Joſhua* to deſtroy all the inhabitants except *Rahab*, and to take none of the ſpoil. III. The curſe denounced againſt him that ſhould rebuild that city.

REFLECTIONS.

JERICHO, the firſt city which the *Iſraelites* took in the land of *Canaan*, was attended with this remarkable circumſtance in the taking of it: it was not taken by force of arms; but the walls of the city were overthrown by the power and preſence of the Almighty, of whoſe preſence the ark, which was carried in proceſſion round the city, was a ſymbol. This firſt advantage which the *Iſraelites* gained over their enemies, was intended by the giver of all victory, to convince them that it was he who put them in poſſeſſion of that country; and therefore, that they were to give him the glory of their ſucceſs, and ſerve him faithfully. The manner of gaining this victory was deſigned likewiſe to convince the *Canaanites*, that they who came againſt them did it in

in obedience to the commands, and under the protection and aſſiſtance of that Almighty Being whom they worſhipped and adored. The next thing remarkable in this hiſtory, is the faith of *Joſhua* and the prieſts, who did as the Lord commanded, not doubting but he would deliver the city into their hands: which made St. *Paul* ſay, in the eleventh chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, that "by faith "the walls of *Jericho* fell down after they were com-"paſſed about ſeven days." God forbad the children of *Iſrael* to take any of the ſpoil of *Jericho*, and commanded them to dedicate it to him, as a teſtimony that they acknowledged him the author of this firſt victory, and of all other victories they ſhould afterwards gain over their enemies. God commanded them to deſtroy the inhabitants of *Jericho*, and the reſt of the *Canaanites*, by reaſon of their abominable wickedneſs; but *Rahab* was ſpared, as the ſpies had promiſed. The behaviour of the children of *Iſrael* towards this woman, is a proof that every one ought religiouſly to perform his vows and engagements, and that God never fails to reward the faith of thoſe who truſt in him. Laſtly, It muſt be obſerved, that the curſe denounced againſt the man who ſhould rebuild the city of *Jericho*, was fulfilled ſix hundred years afterwards, in the time of *Ahab* king of *Iſrael*, as we read in the firſt Book of *Kings*, chap. xvi.

CHAP. VII.

I. THE *Iſraelites* are defeated before the city *Ai*, becauſe a man named *Achan* had taken part of the ſpoil of *Jericho*, contrary to the command of God. II. *Achan* is diſcovered by lot, and ſtoned.

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REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory furniſhes us with ſeveral uſeful reflections: I. In *Achan*, who, contrary to the moſt expreſs prohibition, took of the accurſed or devoted thing, we have an inſtance of the fatal effects of the love of riches, and a proof that the fondneſs for the things of this world leads men into the greateſt and moſt enormous ſins; in ſhort, that nothing is ſacred to thoſe who are ſlaves to this paſſion. II. The defeat of the children of *Iſrael* before *Ai*, occaſioned by *Achan*'s ſacrilege, proves, that the ſin of one man may bring down the curſe of God upon the public; and that injuſtice and ſacrilege deprive men of the divine protection. III. The wonderful manner of diſcovering *Achan* by lot, muſt needs have filled the people with dread; and is an evident proof, that though ſinners may flatter themſelves their ſecret ſins ſhall never be diſcovered, they cannot poſſibly eſcape the knowledge nor the vengeance of the Almighty, who will ſooner or later puniſh the wicked. IV. The tragical end of *Achan* ſhews, that ill-gotten goods are never long poſſeſſed; and that a curſe attends the ſacrilegious and unjuſt, and thoſe who occaſion public calamities. Laſtly, This inſtance of ſeverity muſt be conſidered as neceſſary to teach the children of *Iſrael*, that if they did not reverence the laws of God, they ſhould never proſper; and to inſpire them with fear at that time, when they were likely to be expoſed to great temptations by their victories.

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CHAP. VIII.

I. THE *Iſraelites* take the city *Ai*. II. *Joſhua* builds an altar upon mount *Ebal*, and cauſes the bleſſings and curſes to be pronounced before all the

the people, as *Moſes* had commanded before his death.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three reflections to be made upon this chapter. I. That as ſoon as the children of *Iſrael* had puniſhed *Achan*, and removed the accurſed thing from amongſt them, God delivered *Ai* into their hands. In this example we ſee, that as ſoon as men acknowledge their ſins, and make due reparation, God reſtores them to his favour and protection. II. It muſt be obſerved, that God, who had delivered *Jericho* to the children of *Iſrael* by a miracle, and without their contributing any thing towards it, was pleaſed that they ſhould take the city of *Ai* by force; which ſhews, that they were to neglect no pains on their part, though they were ſecure of the divine protection. Thus ought we to truſt in God, without neglecting at the ſame time the means which he has appointed. Laſtly, *Joſhua*, after he had gained theſe victories, cauſed the law to be written, and the bleſſings and curſes to be pronounced, as *Moſes* had commanded. This he did in obedience to the command of God, and to engage the children of *Iſrael* to walk in the laws of the Lord; and to teſtify their thankfulneſs, at the time when his promiſes were fulfilling.

CHAP. IX.

I. THE *Gibeonites*, terrified and affrighted, and fearing they ſhould be treated as the inhabitats of *Jericho* and *Ai* had been, artfully contrived to make a covenant with *Iſrael*. II. When their artifice was diſcovered, *Joſhua* and the rulers would not ſuffer the people to deſtroy them, becauſe the covenant

covenant had been confirmed by an oath; but the *Gibeonites* became bondmen.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory is well worth our ſerious attention. We find, that though the *Gibeonites* made uſe of falſhood and lying, to induce *Joſhua* to make a covenant with them; and though *Joſhua* made this covenant without aſking counſel of the Lord, and had even promiſed them ſomething contrary to the general command God had given to deſtroy the *Canaanites*; yet as the covenant was made, and confirmed by an oath, he would not ſuffer them to be put to death when the fraud was diſcovered. An evident proof that promiſes are to be religiouſly obſerved, eſpecially when an oath has intervened; and that the regard due to an oath, and the reverence we owe to that Divine Being by whoſe name we ſwear, lay us under an indiſpenſible obligation to fulfil them, even when they are obtained by ſurprize, and cannot be fulfilled without great prejudice to ourſelves, provided they do not oblige us to any thing that is ſinful. That what *Joſhua* did upon this occaſion, was agreeable to the divine will, and that he could not innocently have acted otherwiſe, is evident: for when king *Saul*, four hundred years afterwards, attempted to deſtroy the *Gibeonites*, and had even put ſome of them to death, God was ſo provoked at it, that he ſent a famine upon the kingdom of *Iſrael*, which laſted three years; till it was removed by the death of ſeven of *Saul*'s ſons. Let it, however, be obſerved, that as the fraud of the *Gibeonites* deſerved to be puniſhed, and they had on other accounts juſt reaſon to ſuſpect them, *Joſhua* juſtly, as well as prudently, impoſed ſervitude upon them. God would have every one religiouſly obſerve his oaths, and fulfil his promiſes; but then he

he would have us to be upon our guard againſt thoſe who are falſe and deceitful; who, if they eſcape in this world, will be puniſhed in the world to come.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of the defeat of the five kings that made war againſt the *Gibeonites*, becauſe they had made a covenant with *Iſrael*; and of ſeveral other victories gained by *Joſhua* in the land of *Canaan*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this relation of *Joſhua*'s victory over the five kings, it muſt be obſerved, I. That *Joſhua* undertook to defend the *Gibeonites*, ſtrictly obſerving the covenant he had made with them; and that God himſelf diſplayed his power againſt the kings who made war upon them: an evident proof that God approved of their keeping their engagements with the *Gibeonites*. II. That though he did not gain this victory without fighting, yet he obtained it by the particular aſſiſtance of the Almighty, who upon that occaſion wrought two miracles for them; one was, deſtroying vaſt numbers of the *Canaanites* with great hail-ſtones; and the other, making the ſun ſtand ſtill at the prayer of *Joſhua*, to give him time to purſue his enemies. Thus all our ſucceſs depends chiefly upon the divine aſſiſtance, and yet it is our duty always to join our own care and endeavours to our truſt and confidence in God. This miracle, wrought at the requeſt of *Joſhua*, which is mentioned in the third chapter of the prophet *Habakkuk*, is a very extraordinary inſtance of the efficacy of faith and of prayer. We may conclude with this general reflection, that all *Joſhua*'s victories, and his ſpeedy conqueſt of the land of *Canaan*, plainly ſhew

that

that God was with him; and convince us of the truth of all the promiſes God had made to the children of *Iſrael* by *Moſes*, that their enemies ſhould not ſtand before them; and that he would give them their country and their cities to dwell in. Theſe great events prove, that God is faithful to his promiſes; that he is almighty in the fulfilling them; and that his bleſſing every where accompanies thoſe that truſt in him, and obey his commands.

CHAP. XI.

JOSHUA deſtroys ſeveral kings of *Canaan*, and a part of the *Anakims*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we are to obſerve, I. The wonderful effects of divine power, and the entire accompliſhment of the promiſes of giving the land of *Canaan* to the children of *Iſrael*. II. When we read that the *Iſraelites* utterly deſtroyed the *Canaanites*, we muſt remember, that God commanded them to puniſh and deſtroy that abominable people, who were guilty of the moſt horrid crimes, and might have corrupted the children of *Iſrael*. This conſideration ſufficiently proves, that the deſtruction of the *Canaanites* was very juſt; but it by no means follows, that what the *Iſraelites* did by expreſs command from God, ſhould countenance perſecution, or cruelty and barbarity to our enemies in time of war.

CHAP. XII.

THE names of the ſeveral kings who had been conquered, and their country taken by *Moſes* and *Joſhua*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we ſee God, as he had long before at ſeveral times promiſed, putting the children of *Iſrael* in poſſeſſion of the greateſt part of the land of *Canaan*, the conqueſt of which was begun by *Moſes* and compleated by *Joſhua*. It appears from this book, that every conſiderable city and diviſion of that country had its king, ſince there were no leſs than one and thirty kings vanquiſhed; whom the *Iſraelites* ſubdued, not by their own ſword, but by the aſſiſtance of the Lord of hoſts, who bleſſed their arms, and wrought many wonders for them.

CHAP. XIII.

THIS chapter conſiſts of two parts. I. An account of what ſtill remained unconquered in the land of *Canaan*. II. The portion which the tribe of *Manaſſeh* had of the country on the other ſide *Jordan*, conquered by *Moſes*.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD told *Joſhua*, who was now an hundred years old, that there ſtill remained ſome of the *Canaanites* to be deſtroyed, and that they would hold out ſome time longer, before they ſhould intirely diſpoſſeſs them. God did not think fit to put the *Iſraelites* at once in full poſſeſſion of all the land of *Canaan*, becauſe the *Iſraelites* could not have filled the whole country; and, as it is elſewhere obſerved, a great part of the country being uninhabited, the beaſts of the field would have over-run them. He ſo ordered it likewiſe, to keep his people in awe, and chaſtiſe them by their means, whenever they forſook the Lord their God, as it often happened. However, afterwards, the remnant of the *Canaanites*, eſpecially the *Philiſtines*, who a long time oppreſſed

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the people of God, were ſubdued, particularly in the reign of *David*.

CHAP. XIV.

I. WHEN the land was to be divided, *Caleb* applied for the city and territory of *Hebron*, which was given him, according to the promiſe God had made him.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this hiſtory we have a very remarkable inſtance of the divine bleſſing upon *Caleb*, who had been ſent with *Joſhua* to view the land of *Canaan*, whilſt *Moſes* lived, and ſoon after their coming out of *Egypt*, and who had encouraged the *Iſraelites* to invade that country, whilſt the reſt of the ſpies diſcouraged them. God then promiſed *Joſhua* and *Caleb*, that none but they ſhould enter into the land of *Canaan*. And in truth, they were the only perſons that did enter into it, whilſt the reſt of the people periſhed in the wilderneſs. *Caleb* attained to a good old age, being ſtill in his full ſtrength. God gave him the country of *Hebron*, and ordered that this recompence ſhould deſcend to his poſterity, and remain to future ages a monument of the faith and zeal of that holy man. Thus God bleſſes his faithful ſervants; and thus has godlineſs the promiſe of this life, as well as of that which is to come.

CHAP. XV.

IN this chapter and the following, to the nineteenth, we are informed in what manner the country conquered by *Joſhua*, after the death of *Moſes*, was divided among the nine tribes and a half; what were the borders of each tribe, and the names of its

cities. The fifteenth chapter, in particular, deſcribes the lot of the tribe of *Judah*, in which *Caleb* and *Othniel* had their portion. It appears, by the great number of cities and villages which fell to *Judah*'s lot, that this tribe was extremely powerful.

CHAP. XVI.

THIS chapter deſcribes what fell to the lot of the tribe of *Ephraim*, and the half tribe of *Manaſſeh*.

CHAP. XVII.

THIS chapter continues the account of the tribe of *Manaſſeh*'s portion on this ſide *Jordan*. The children of *Ephraim* and *Manaſſeh* being very much ſtreightened for room in the country that fell to their ſhare, *Joſhua* orders them to take in the land of the *Perizzites* and *Rephaims*, which, he aſſured them they ſhould become maſters of.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE tabernacle is ſet up in *Shiloh*, where it remained about three hundred and thirty years, till the time of *Samuel* the prophet. *Joſhua* orders a plan to be taken of that part of the land of *Canaan*, which was ſtill to be divided among the ſeven tribes, who had not yet had their portion. This done, the diviſion is made before God in *Shiloh*; and what fell to the tribe of *Benjamin* is here deſcribed.

CHAP. XIX.

THIS chapter deſcribes the lot that fell to the ſeveral tribes of *Simeon*, *Zebulon*, *Iſſachar*, *Aſher*, *Naphthali* and *Dan*. When this diviſion was made, they

they gave to *Joſhua*, at the command of God, an inheritance, in which he built the city of *Timnathſerah*, and dwelt there.

REFLECTIONS *on chap.* XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, *and* XIX.

ON the diviſion of the land of *Canaan*, we muſt make the following reflections. I. As the Lord had given this land to the children of *Iſrael*, it was divided according to his expreſs command; that ſo every one might ſubmit to what was determined by nothing leſs than the authority of God himſelf. For this reaſon the diviſion was made at *Shiloh*, before the tabernacle, by *Eleazar* the high prieſt, and *Joſhua*, and the rulers of the people, and the lot caſt before God. II. It is worth notice, that the lot fell to ſeveral tribes juſt as *Jacob* and *Moſes* had foretold. III. God was pleaſed the land ſhould be divided among the tribes, while *Joſhua*, *Eleazar*, and the elders of the people were living, to prevent diſputes afterwards, and the tribes invading each other's property. IV. This too contributed to the ſecurity and defence of the country, as each tribe was concerned to defend its own property. Laſtly, This diviſion ſerved to keep up the diſtinction of tribes, which was to continue till the coming of the *Meſſiah*.

CHAP. XX.

JOSHUA appoints ſix cities, as God commanded him, for places of refuge to them that had killed any one unawares.

REFLECTIONS.

THE children of *Iſrael* appointed cities of refuge in the land of *Canaan*, in the manner they had been directed by God. By this means, pro-

viſion was made for the ſecurity of thoſe who had been ſo unfortunate as to kill any one accidentally and without any ill deſign; and the relations of the perſon ſlain were prevented from avenging his death. It muſt, however, be remarked, that before the perſons who had committed accidental murder were admitted into theſe cities, the judges were to take cognizance of the fact; and that, when they returned, after the death of the high prieſt, to their poſſeſſions, they were again to ſtand before the congregation in judgment. Whence it follows, that as judges ought to protect the innocent, ſo they ought not to declare any one innocent, without good reaſon. It appears from hence, that in the caſe of murder, eſpecially, magiſtrates ought to be particularly careful to get the moſt exact information, and uſe all the precautions poſſible to prevent a real murderer from eſcaping unpuniſhed.

CHAP. XXI.

THE Levites applying to *Eleazar*, *Joſhua*, and the chief of the people, for the cities which *Moſes* had ſaid ſhould be given them to dwell in, they had aſſigned to them forty eight cities, with their ſuburbs.

REFLECTIONS.

THE heads of *Iſrael*, when they aſſigned forty eight cities for the Levites, fulfilled the command of God by *Moſes*. As the Levites had no portion in the land of *Canaan* as the other tribes had, it was but reaſonable they ſhould have cities to dwell in. By this means the Levites were diſperſed through the whole country; which God deſigned, for the better inſtructing of the people, and keeping them in order,

order, in obedience to his laws. The care God then took of his miniſters, proves, that thoſe of the Chriſtian church ought likewiſe to provide for their ſpiritual guides, in ſuch a manner, that no neceſſary ſubſiſtance may be wanting.

CHAP. XXII.

I. THE tribes of *Reuben*, *Gad*, and the half tribe of *Manaſſeh*, returning into their own country, after they had aſſiſted the other tribes to conquer the land of *Canaan*, built an altar near *Jordan*. II. The other tribes hearing of it, gathered together, in order to make war upon them, imagining their brethren were going to eſtabliſh a form of worſhip different from what God had preſcribed. But when they found they had no ſuch deſign, the war was ſoon put a ſtop to.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory teaches us, I. That we ſhould never be too haſty in condemning the actions of others from bare appearances; that ſome things appear criminal, which at the bottom are innocent; and that before we break the peace, and proceed to ſeverity, we ſhould take care to be well informed, and firſt make uſe of gentler methods. II. We have in this war, which broke out among the tribes of *Iſrael*, a proof, that quarrels on account of religion may be attended with very fatal conſequences; that we ſhould never fall out upon matters of ſmall importance; and ſhould always conſider thoſe as our brethren, who adhere with us to the true ſervice of God, and hold the fundamentals of religion. Laſtly, It appears from this hiſtory, that the *Iſraelites* of the two tribes and a half, and thoſe of the other tribes, were all of them, at that time, ſincerely attached to

the worſhip of the true God; which was the reaſon they were ſo eaſily reconciled. This example teaches us, that we ſhould not turn aſide from the purity of religion, nor alter that worſhip which God has preſcribed in his word; and that when we are of the ſame ſentiments about the eſſentials of religion, it is an eaſy thing not to diſagree about the reſt.

CHAP. XXIII.

JOSHUA being now very old, and drawing near his end, aſſembles the chief of the people, and exhorts them to keep the law of God, to ſerve him faithfully, and above all, not to have any intercourſe or familiarity with the *Canaanites*; and to ſhun idolatry: threatning their diſobedience with the ſevereſt judgments.

REFLECTIONS.

JOSHUA's exhortations to the children of *Iſrael* before his death, are a proof of his great zeal and piety; an argument of his ſincere affection for that people, and ſhew how much he had at heart the preſervation of true religion among them after his death. Thoſe who are appointed rulers of the people, ſhould improve by ſo noble an example; and learn from hence, that it ſhould be their chief care and concern to ſupport the cauſe of piety and religion in their own time, and provide for its ſupport among thoſe who come after them. Theſe remonſtrances of *Joſhua* teach us likewiſe, that a firm adherence to the ſervice of God, and obedience to his laws, is the only way to ſecure the happineſs of a nation; as, on the contrary, diſobedience and ungodlineſs deprive men of the divine bleſſing, and bring God's judgments upon them.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIV.

I. *JOSHUA* calls the people together again before his death; and briefly recounts what had happened to their fathers and to them, from the calling of *Abraham* to their entering the land of *Canaan*. II. He renews the covenant between God and them, and engages them by the moſt grave and ſolemn proteſtations, and by repeated promiſes, never to forſake the ſervice of the Lord their God. III. He erects a monument in memory of this renewal of the covenant: After which we read of his death, and of the death of the high prieſt *Eleazar*, the ſon of *Aaron*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. AS *Joſhua* reminded the *Iſraelites* of all that God had done for them, from *Abraham* and the time of the patriarchs, to their entering into the land of *Canaan*; ſo Chriſtians ſhould continually call to mind the great mercies they have received from him, that by this conſideration they may be inſpired to ſerve him truly all the days of their life. II. Theſe grave and ſolemn proteſtations which *Joſhua* made to the children of *Iſrael*, aſking them ſeveral times, whether they would ſerve God ſincerely, with all their heart, engage us to conſider, that as the ſervice which God requires of us is reaſonable and neceſſary, ſo ſhould it be free and voluntary, and, as *Joſhua* expreſſes it, we ſhould *chooſe* the Lord for our God. God has made known his will to men, and ſhewed them what they muſt do to be happy; that he is a jealous God, who will not leave rebellion and diſobedience unpuniſhed; and therefore we ought ſeriouſly to conſider what we are doing, when we ſolemnly engage to ſerve him faithfully. The reply the *Iſraelites* made

made to *Joſhua*, and their repeated promiſes, declaring they would never forſake the Lord, and calling God to witneſs againſt them, if they failed in that fidelity which they then promiſed him, ſhould put us in mind, that we have alſo engaged ourſelves, by ſolemn and repeated promiſes, and upon pain of being rejected and forſaken of God, to ſerve him faithfully all our days. The laſt reflection to be made on this book is, that *Joſhua* lived to a great age, and had the joy and ſatisfaction to ſee the *Iſraelites* in poſſeſſion of the land of *Canaan*, and to leave them fully reſolved to adhere to the worſhip of the true God. The *Iſraelites* ſerved the Lord all the days of *Joſhua*, and *Eleazar*, and of thoſe who had been eye-witneſſes of the wonderful works which God had done for that people; but after the death of *Joſhua* they corrupted themſelves. This ſhews, that the life of good men and true ſervants of God is of great importance; and the loſs to the church is very great when God calls them hence.

The end of the Book of JOSHUA.

THE

THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

ARGUMENT.

The Book of Judges *contains the history of the children of* Israel, *from the death of* Joshua *to the time of* Eli, *who was the last judge; comprehending about three hundred years. The judges were persons raised up by God in an extraordinary manner, to deliver the people from their enemies, and to govern them.*

CHAP. I.

I. THE tribes of *Judah* and *Simeon* continue the war against those *Canaanites* that had not yet been conquered by *Joshua*; but did not entirely destroy them. II. The same happened in the countries belonging to the other tribes.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE first thing we learn from this Book is, that God did not forsake the people of *Israel* after the death of *Joshua*; and that he continued to subdue the *Canaanites* unto them. However, he did not destroy them utterly; but in almost all the tribes, the *Canaanites* remained masters of some part of

of the country. God ſo ordered it, that that people might be inſtruments in his hand, to chaſten the *Iſraelites* whenever they ſhould offend him. This was actually the caſe ſeveral times, as we find by the Book of *Judges*. There is one particular reflection to be made upon *Adonibezek*, whoſe thumbs and great toes were cut off by the children of *Iſrael*, becauſe he had ſerved ſeventy princes in the ſame manner. This example ſhews, that God is juſt, and that he brings upon cruel and unrighteous men the ſame evil they had done to others.

CHAP. II.

THE children of *Iſrael* falling into idolatry after the death of *Joſhua*, God ſent an angel to reprove them for their rebellion; and puniſhed them by giving them up ſeveral times into the hands of their enemies; and when they turned to him he raiſed up judges to deliver them.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains ſeveral inſtructions of great importance, and particularly theſe four. I. It is ſaid that the *Jews* corrupted themſelves after the death of *Joſhua* and the elders, and that another generation aroſe that knew not God; which ſhews us, that men eaſily forget the goodneſs of the Lord, and their duty; that nations ſoon grow corrupt when they have not good rulers; and that one of the greateſt misfortunes that can happen to a nation is, when God takes away from them pious rulers and magiſtrates. II. This chapter informs us, that God, for the puniſhment of the *Jews*, delivered them up to their enemies; that the hand of God was every where againſt them for evil; and that they fell into great diſtreſs. From whence we may

may infer, that God withdraws his protection from thoſe nations that ſin againſt him; and that as ſoon as we forſake him, we muſt be miſerable. III. We are likewiſe led to reflect upon God's goodneſs towards the *Jews*. When the Lord ſaw them engaged in rebellion and idolatry, he ſent his angel to reproach them for their unbelief; and as ſoon as they acknowledged and bewailed their ſins, he was moved with their repentance and tears, and raiſed them up deliverers. God ſeeks only the converſion and ſalvation of ſinners; to bring them to himſelf he warns them of their danger, and to his gracious warnings adds his chaſtening rod; but as ſoon as he ſees them ſincerely humbled, his wrath is turned away from them. Laſtly, It is here ſaid, that as ſoon as the judges were dead, and the children of *Iſrael* had a little reſt, they forgot the good reſolutions they had made in their affliction, returned to their former ſins, and expoſed themſelves to freſh judgments. Such is the inconſtancy of mankind, who eaſily abuſe the reſt which God gives them: which ſhews how neceſſary it is God ſhould correct and afflict them from time to time, in order to awaken them, and prevent their being corrupted and ruined by proſperity.

CHAP. III.

THIS chapter contains, I. The names of the nations that remained among the children of *Iſrael*, and tempted them to idolatry. II. The hiſtory of the three firſt judges of *Iſrael*; which were *Othniel*, who delivered the people from the yoke of the king of *Meſopotamia*; *Ehud*, who delivered them from the *Moabites*; and *Shamgar*, who ſlew the *Philiſtines*.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to conſider, I. That God ſuffered ſome of the *Canaanites* to remain among the children of *Iſrael* to try his people, and to chaſten them by means of thoſe idolatrous nations. This is a lively repreſentation of our condition in this world, where God diſpenſes evil as well as good, and expoſes us to divers temptations and trials, to put us upon our guard, and try our fidelity. II. We are here told, that the *Iſraelites*, making marriages and mingling with the *Canaanites*, contrary to the expreſs command of God, and worſhipping their idols; the Lord puniſhed them for it by this very people, or by their neighbouring kings, in order to bring them back to their duty. This leads us to conſider all intercourſe and familiarity with the wicked as ſinful; and ſhews, that God, in juſtice as well as love to men, chaſtiſes them that he may cure them; and makes their ſin prove their puniſhment. III. When the *Jews* acknowledged their fault, and believed in the Lord, he raiſed them up deliverers: from whence we learn, how profitable it is to be afflicted, and the great mercy of the Lord towards them that make a right uſe of their afflictions. IV. It is ſaid of the *Jews*, that as ſoon as they enjoyed any reſt, they again corrupted themſelves; which is a melancholy proof that proſperity is a dangerous ſtate, and that afflictions are very neceſſary. Laſtly, There is a particular obſervation to be made upon the action of *Ehud*, who ſlew the king of the *Moabites*. This action would have been criminal had not *Ehud* done it by an expreſs order from God; and therefore it ought not to be made a precedent to authorize any thing of the like nature, either towards unjuſt and cruel oppreſſors, or any perſon whatſoever.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of *Deborah*, who judged *Iſrael* after the death of *Shamgar*, and with *Barak* delivered the children of *Iſrael* from the tyranny of *Jabin* the king of *Hazar*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three things principally to be conſidered in this chapter: I. That the children of *Iſrael* offended God again, and for their puniſhment were expoſed to the tyranny of *Jabin* king of *Hazor*, who oppreſſed them twenty years. Alas! how ſoon do men forget the evils they have ſuffered, and bring greater upon themſelves, by returning to their ſins. II. That God, moved by the tears and repentance of the *Iſraelites*, delivered them by the hands of a woman, named *Deborah*, who judged them at that time. God makes uſe of what inſtruments he pleaſes, even the weakeſt, to bring about his deſigns; and the choice he made of that woman, was deſigned to teach the *Iſraelites*, that they were beholden to him alone for their deliverance. III. As for the action of *Jael*, who killed *Siſera* when he was aſleep in her tent, where ſhe had invited him to come and conceal himſelf, though ſhe and her people were at peace with him; we muſt look upon it as intirely wrong in itſelf, and by no means to be imitated, though God was pleaſed to make uſe of it to bring about the utter overthrow of the enemies of his people.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

DEBORAH praiſes the Lord in a ſong after ſhe and *Barak* had gained the victory over the king of *Hazor*. In this ſong ſhe celebrates the power of God, and particularly this great deliverance he had juſt wrought for his people. This ſong is wrote in a figurative and poetical ſtile; full of thoughts and expreſſions quite unuſual among us, which makes it ſomewhat obſcure.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS ſong of *Deborah* ſhews, that that woman was as famous for her piety and zeal, as for her courage and conduct; wherein ſhe may ſerve for an example, not only to perſons of her own ſex, but to all that are in authority, and teach them to truſt in God alone, and give him the glory of all their ſucceſs. It appears alſo from hence, that the cuſtom of ſinging public hymns of praiſe to God, for ſignal mercies received, was very ancient; which ſhould excite our zeal and gratitude, not only for the temporal favours we receive, but eſpecially for ſpiritual bleſſings and deliverances; referring all to the power and goodneſs of God, praiſing and bleſſing him in a public and ſolemn manner.

CHAP. VI.

THIS chapter has four parts: I. The rebellion of the *Iſraelites* againſt God, and their puniſhment, in being made ſubject to the *Midianites*, and the rebukes of the prophet upon that occaſion. II. The calling of *Gideon*, who was the fifth judge of *Iſrael*. III. *Gideon*'s zeal in deſtroying the altar of *Baal*. IV. The miracle of the fleece.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE have here another inſtance of the *Iſraelites* rebellion, and a proof of their proneneſs to idolatry, notwithſtanding all the miſeries they had endured, and all the deliverances God had vouchſafed to them; we ſee likewiſe how God puniſhed them by delivering them into the hands of the *Midianites*, who oppreſſed them, and reduced them to great diſtreſs; as well as the goodneſs of God when they cried unto him, in ſending them a prophet to exhort them to repentance, and in raiſing up *Gideon* to be their deliverer. This hiſtory ſhews, what is the uſual wickedneſs and ingratitude of men towards God; the neceſſity and advantage of affliction; and the Lord's mercy towards thoſe who with humility turn to him. Let it be obſerved, that when the angel of the Lord called *Gideon*, and aſſured him God was with him; he could not believe the Lord was with his people, when they were ſo cruelly oppreſſed by the *Midianites*; but ſtill the angel of the Lord promiſed him the *Iſraelites* ſhould be delivered by his means. The church and people of God are ſometimes reduced to ſuch a ſtate, that God ſeems to have caſt them off; but they ſhould never deſpair of his aſſiſtance, even in the greateſt extremity, becauſe then God is moſt ſure to deliver them. The two miracles which God wrought, one in conſuming with fire the fleſh and the cakes that *Gideon* had preſented to the angel, and the other in the fleece, tended to aſſure that ruler of the divine protection and aſſiſtance. Laſtly, It appears from this chapter, that *Gideon* was a man of great piety, humility and faith, which he gave proof of in his diſcourſe with the angel; and his great zeal appeared particularly in demoliſhing the altar of *Baal*. From this example we learn, that piety and humi-

lity are not inconſiſtent with true valour; and that God aſſiſts and protects thoſe who endeavour to promote his glory: for though *Gideon*, by deſtroying the altar of *Baal*, expoſed himſelf to great danger, yet no harm happened to him, any more than to his father *Joaſh*.

CHAP. VII.

I. GOD orders *Gideon* to chooſe three hundred men out of all the army, and promiſes by them to deſtroy the *Midianites*. II. *Gideon* is confirmed in his hopes of victory, by a dream which he heard one of the ſoldiers of *Midian* relate to his companion. III. After this he attacks the *Midianites*, and entirely defeats them.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory is attended with very extraordinary marks of the particular interpoſition of Providence. I. God's ordering all thoſe to be ſent away who, in the army of *Iſrael*, were afraid of their enemies; and, of thoſe that remained, taking only three hundred: which was a ſufficient proof that God was the author of this victory. II. The intervention of Providence in the dream of the *Midianitiſh* ſoldier, which ſerved to diſhearten the enemies of *Iſrael*, and inſpire *Gideon* and thoſe that were with him with courage and confidence. III. The terror and conſternation of the *Midianites*, who were routed only by the noiſe of the trumpets, and the ſight of the lamps which *Gideon*'s ſoldiers held in their hands, and put into ſuch confuſion that they killed one another. Theſe are all ſuch extraordinary marks of divine power, as leave no room to doubt but the Almighty fought for his people. From hence we likewiſe learn, that God often brings about

the

the wiſe ends of his providence by means which appear the weakeſt and moſt ineffectual; that he makes the wicked, and the enemies of his church, and of good men, bring about their own ruin and deſtruction; and that when he has chaſtened and afflicted thoſe he loves, he never fails to help and deliver them.

CHAP. VIII.

I. GIDEON, when he had appeaſed the *Ephraimites*, purſues the victory he had gained over the *Midianites*; and puniſhes the cities of *Succoth* and *Penuel*, for refuſing refreſhment to his ſoldiers. II. After theſe victories, the men of *Iſrael* would have made him king; which he refuſed. He makes an ephod, which was a ſnare unto him: however, *Iſrael* had reſt all his days. After his death they fell again into idolatry.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are here to obſerve, I. The continuance of that ſucceſs which God granted *Gideon*, and the advantages he obtained over the *Midianites*. II. The juſt puniſhment of the inhabitants of *Succoth* and *Penuel*, who refuſed to furniſh victuals for his army, and inſulted him. III. The juſtice and clemency which he ſhewed in the puniſhment of *Zebah* and *Zalmunna*, who would not have been put to death, if thoſe two princes had not been guilty of the murder of his brethren. IV. His piety and humility in refuſing to be made a king. V. The fault he committed in making an ephod, which is thought to have been an habit or ornament worn by the prieſts, or ſome image. Though *Gideon* perhaps did not make this ephod with any ill deſign, but only as a memorial of his victory, and an expreſ-

ſion of their gratitude; yet, as it was contrary to the law of God, it was a ſin; and this ephod became afterwards an occaſion of idolatry to the people, and of the ruin of his family, as the ſacred hiſtory informs us. This example ſhews, that thoſe to whom God has granted great favours, and who are endued with great virtues, are ſometimes guilty of faults that bring upon them and their poſterity the judgments of God. Laſtly, We ſee the ingratitude of the *Jews* to *Gideon*, ſince they ſhewed not the leaſt mark of kindneſs to his family after his death, though they owed him ſo great obligations. But their ingratitude to God is chiefly remarkable, who, as ſoon as *Gideon* was dead, forſook the ſervice of the true God, and worſhipped idols. A ſad example of the proneneſs of mankind to forget the divine bleſſings in proſperity!

CHAP. IX.

I. *Abimelech*, the ſon of *Gideon*, is made prince by the men of *Shechem*. He is reckoned the ſixth judge of *Iſrael*, and ruled three years. He kills all his brethren excepting *Jotham*, who eſcaping his fury, reproached the *Shechemites* with their ingratitude, and foretold their ruin in the parable of the trees and the bramble. The meaning of which was, That *Gideon* and his ſons had refuſed to reign; and that *Abimelech* was made prince, though unworthy of it, being a very bad man, and the ſon of a concubine. II. After this *Abimelech* and the *Shechemites* falling out, a man named *Gaal* perſuaded the *Shechemites* to revolt againſt *Abimelech*, but was defeated, and the city of *Shechem*, with all its inhabitants, was deſtroyed. III. Soon after *Abimelech* beſieges *Thebez*, and is killed by a woman: Thus both *Abimelech* and

and the men of *Shechem* were puniſhed, as *Jotham* had foretold.

REFLECTIONS.

TWO things are here offered to our conſideration, I. The ambition of *Abimelech*, who, inſtead of imitating the piety and modeſty of his father *Gideon*, who had refuſed a kingdom, would be made king of the *Shechemites*; and his cruelty towards his brethren, in cauſing them to be put to death. God permitted this ſtrange event, for the puniſhment of *Gideon*'s family, as well as of the *Shechemites*, who ſubmitted themſelves to *Abimelech*, inſtead of remaining in the condition they had been in during the life of *Gideon*. In like manner, God, for wiſe reaſons, ſuffers tyrants to ſet themſelves up, and cruel and unjuſt men to ſucceed in their undertakings. II. *Jotham* reproached the *Shechemites* for their ingratitude and perfidiouſneſs, and foretold their ruin, and the ruin of *Abimelech*, which accordingly happened afterwards. It is true, indeed, that *Abimelech*, though he reigned unjuſtly, and was guilty of the murder of his brethren, had good ſucceſs at the firſt, as he conquered *Gaal*, and the *Shechemites* that had rebelled againſt him; god ſo permitting for their puniſhment: but at laſt he was killed by a woman, whilſt he beſieged the city of *Thebez*. Thus the *Shechemites*, who had contributed to the death of the ſons of *Gideon*, and to the ſetting up of *Abimelech*, were puniſhed by the ſame prince whom they had choſen; and *Abimelech* himſelf, after he had been an inſtrument, in the hands of a juſt God, for the chaſtiſement of that people, underwent the puniſhment which he had deſerved, and *Jotham* had foretold. Thus God brought upon the head of *Abimelech*, as the ſacred hiſtorian obſerves, the evil that he

had committed againſt his father and his brethren. Sooner or later the curſe of God overtakes unjuſt and cruel men, and brings them at laſt to an evil end, after having granted them good ſucceſs, and made uſe of them for the correction of others.

CHAP. X.

I. THIS chapter gives an account of *Tola*, who was the ſeventh, and *Jair*, who was the eighth judge of *Iſrael*. II. Of their being delivered into the hands of the *Philiſtines* and the *Ammonites*, for relapſing into idolatry, from whoſe oppreſſion the Lord at firſt refuſed to deliver them; but at laſt, moved by their humiliation, he took pity on them.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we have chiefly to conſider here is, That the *Jews*, forgetting the mercies of the Lord, and abuſing the reſt which he had granted them, returned to their idolatry after the death of *Tola* and *Jair*; ſo that they worſhipped all the gods of the neighbouring nations, and forſook the Lord, and entirely rejected his ſervice. Theſe frequent relapſes ſhew the proneneſs of the *Jews* to idolatry, and how neceſſary it was they ſhould be afflicted, to heal their backſlidings. Men are very apt to forget themſelves when they enjoy eaſe and proſperity, and to abuſe thoſe bleſſings. When the *Iſraelites* had forſaken the Lord, he ſuffered their enemies to oppreſs them, and have them in ſubjection; and even when they called unto him in their trouble, he refuſed to hear their cry and to help them, and ſent them to the falſe gods whom they worſhipped; but at laſt, moved with their calamities, and ſeeing that they put away their idols, he again took pity on them,

them, and raiſed them up a deliverer. This proceeding of the Almighty with the *Jews*, leads us to conſider the juſtice of God in chaſtiſing thoſe who offend him; and ſhews, that the firſt motions of repentance which ſinners feel in their affliction, are not always ſincere: for which reaſon, God does not immediately deliver them, nor pardon them, till he ſees they are truly humbled, and they give proof of the ſincerity of their repentance, by perſevering in prayer, and forſaking their ſins.

CHAP. XI.

IN this chapter begins the hiſtory of *Jephthah*, who was the ninth judge of *Iſrael*. In this hiſtory there are three things moſt obſervable; namely, the manner of his being made captain over *Iſrael*; his war with the *Ammonites*; and his vow.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may here obſerve, I. That although *Jephthah* had been driven away, and ill uſed by the men of *Gilead*, yet he undertook to defend them, when deſired. II. Before he went againſt the king of *Ammon*, who made war upon *Iſrael*, he ſent ambaſſadors to him twice to endeavour to divert him from his deſign, and to repreſent to him the juſtice of their cauſe. This cool and prudent behaviour teaches us, that before we proceed to extremities, we ſhould try all gentler ways: an example which Chriſtian princes would do well to imitate. III. In the victory that *Jephthah* gained over the *Ammonites*, we ſee that God, though he is pleaſed for a time to bear with kings who are engaged in unjuſt wars, puniſhes them at laſt. IV. *Jephthah*'s vow was a mark of his zeal, and at the ſame time of his imprudence. His great grief at the ſight of his daughter,

and what he did in conſequence of his vow, teaches to avoid raſh vows, and to fulfil the vows we do make, as far as lawfully we can. It is not, however, neceſſary to believe that *Jephthah* ſacrificed his daughter, that is, burnt her, which would have been a barbarous action, and odious in the ſight of God; but that he conſecrated or devoted her to the Lord, in ſuch a manner that ſhe never married; which is the meaning of the expreſſion, *She knew no man*. Now the reaſon why *Jephthah* expreſſed ſo much concern at this was, becauſe as ſhe was his only child, he would be deprived of an opportunity of ſeeing any poſterity by her. Laſtly, The noble reſolution and piety of *Jephthah*'s daughter, who would not have her father expoſed himſelf, or the people, to the divine vengeance, by breaking his vow, is an example for us to ſacrifice our private intereſt, and all that is deareſt to us, to the glory of God, and the good of the public.

CHAP. XII.

I. JEPHTHAH being attacked by the *Ephraimites*, makes war againſt them, and kills a great number of them; and when he had judged *Iſrael* ſix years, he died. II. After his death, *Ibzan* was the tenth judge, *Elon* the eleventh, and *Abdon* the twelfth.

REFLECTIONS.

THE defeat of the *Ephraimites* by *Jephthah*, was a juſt puniſhment for their pride, in unjuſtly declaring war againſt a man, to whom the *Iſraelites* in general owed ſo great obligation; an inſtance of the juſt judgment of God on thoſe who break the peace, and attack others without a juſt cauſe. The account we have at the end of the chapter, of God's

raiſing

raiſing up other judges after the death of *Jephthah*, ſhews us his forbearance and long-ſuffering towards the *Iſraelites*; ſince, notwithſtanding their frequent rebellions, he ſent them from time to time judges and captains to govern, and deliver them from thoſe that oppreſſed them.

CHAP. XIII.

THE *Iſraelites* being oppreſſed by the *Philiſtines*, God ſends an angel to *Manoah*'s wife, and afterwards to *Manoah* himſelf, to promiſe them a ſon who ſhould deliver *Iſrael*. This promiſe the angel confirmed, by cauſing fire from heaven to conſume the ſacrifice which *Manoah* offered unto the Lord. Some time after *Sampſon* was born, who became afterwards the thirteenth judge of *Iſrael*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections to be made upon this chapter are as follow: I. That God, in great mercy to his people, cauſed *Sampſon* to be born, at a time when they had been enſlaved by the *Philiſtines* forty years. II. That the birth of *Sampſon* was miraculous; that an angel foretold it to his mother, who was barren; and that the promiſe of the angel was ratified by a ſignal miracle, fire from heaven having conſumed the ſacrifice of *Manoah*, *Sampſon*'s father: all which denoted, that *Sampſon* ſhould be a man raiſed by God in a very extraordinary manner. III. It appears by this hiſtory, that *Manoah* and his wife were both godly perſons; and that the ſon which God gave them was a reward of their piety. We may, laſtly, obſerve, that the angel acquainted *Manoah* and his wife, that the child which was to be born ſhould be dedicated to God by the vow of a *Nazarite*; which ſhewed,

ſhewed, that God deſigned *Sampſon* for great things, and that whatever he did in an extraordinary manner, ſhould proceed from the ſpirit of God.

CHAP. XIV.

THE ſacred hiſtorian relates the marriage of *Sampſon*; and the riddle he put forth upon the honey he found in the body of a lion which he had killed. This hiſtory is related, becauſe it was the beginning and occaſion of the war that *Sampſon* had with the *Philiſtines*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE muſt obſerve upon the life of *Sampſon* in general, that though God made uſe of him for the deliverance of the children of *Iſrael*, yet he did ſeveral things that are not to be imitated, and which are even to be condemned. His marriage with a *Philiſtine* woman was againſt the law of God; but God permitted it, becauſe it gave *Sampſon* an occaſion to make war upon the *Philiſtines*. Thus God ſuffers ſeveral things, for wiſe ends beſt known to himſelf, though he does not approve the things themſelves. Laſtly, It appears clearly from this relation, that *Sampſon*'s great ſtrength, and all that he did againſt the *Philiſtines*, was owing to a divine aſſiſtance.

CHAP. XV.

I. SAMPSON, provoked becauſe his wife was given to another perſon, burns the *Philiſtines* corn, and then defeats them. II. Being, after this, delivered to the *Philiſtines*, he breaks the bands which they had tied him with, and kills a thouſand of them with the jaw-bone of an aſs; and being very thirſty, God, by a miracle, quenched his thirſt.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

WE muſt obſerve on this relation, that God ſuffered *Sampſon*'s wife to be taken from him, and the houſe of his father-in-law to be burnt by the *Philiſtines*, to give *Sampſon* an occaſion to chaſtiſe them, and even kill great numbers of them: ſo that what *Sampſon* did out of a ſpirit of revenge, proved a means, in the hands of God, to bring down the pride and tyranny of the *Philiſtines*, who then oppreſſed the *Iſraelites*. The ſeveral events of this hiſtory ſhew, that as long as *Sampſon* kept the vow of a *Nazarite*, nothing could hurt him; he was endued with extraordinary and ſupernatural ſtrength, by which he broke the cords they bound him with, and ſlew a thouſand *Philiſtines*; and God hearkened ſo far to his prayer, as by a miracle to ſupply him with water to quench his thirſt. But we ſhall ſee in the ſequel, that he was deprived of his ſtrength, and of all theſe advantages, becauſe he did not religiouſly obſerve his vow. However, theſe extraordinary events were ſo diſpenſed by Providence, becauſe very proper to make a deep impreſſion upon the minds both of the *Iſraelites* and *Philiſtines*, and lead them to acknowledge the power of the true God, and look upon *Sampſon* as an extraordinary perſon raiſed up to deliver *Iſrael*.

CHAP. XVI.

I. SAMPSON carries away the gates of the city *Gaza*. II. After this, a woman, named *Dalilah*, having prevailed upon him to diſcover to her that his ſtrength conſiſted in his hair, delivered him to the *Philiſtines*, who put out his eyes. III. Some time after he pulled down the temple of *Dagon*,

Dagon, deſtroyed a great number of *Philiſtines*, and periſhed himſelf upon the ſame occaſion.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE we are again to obſerve, that God was with *Sampſon* whilſt he kept the vow of a *Nazarite*; but that the cauſe of his ruin was his love of women, and in particular of *Dalilah*; who by her artifice prevailed upon him to tell her wherein his ſtrength conſiſted; which *Sampſon* could not do without breaking his vow, and expoſing himſelf to the danger of loſing thoſe great advantages which till then he enjoyed. The loſs of *Sampſon*'s ſtrength, and the ſhameful condition he was reduced to by thoſe very *Philiſtines*, who had been before under the greateſt terror and conſternation upon his account, ſhew plainly what misfortunes men expoſe themſelves to when they forſake God, and are not faithful in the diſcharge of thoſe duties they are particularly called to; and that God forſakes thoſe who give themſelves up to the infamous luſts of the fleſh, and thoſe that deſpiſe the gifts and graces they have received from him. It is to be obſerved, nevertheleſs, that God again endued *Sampſon* with ſuch an extraordinary ſtrength, as enabled him to deſtroy three thouſand *Philiſtines* at his death, to leſſen the power of thoſe idolatrous people. Laſtly, It muſt be conſidered, upon the whole hiſtory of *Sampſon*, that he did ſeveral actions which were very criminal; but that God makes uſe of what perſons he pleaſes, even thoſe who have not true piety, in the execution of his deſigns, which we have ſeveral inſtances of in holy writ. Therefore the behaviour of *Sampſon*, or any others mentioned in ſcripture, whoſe lives were irregular, is not to be imitated any farther than it was right and agreeable to the will of God.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

A Man named *Micah*, cauſed two idols to be made, and appointed one of his ſons to be their prieſt, till meeting with a Levite, he eſtabliſhed him in the place of his ſon. It is not, perhaps, poſſible to determine exactly the time when what is related in this chapter happened. It ſeems to be beſt referred to the times following *Joſhua* and the elders; when *Phineas*, the ſon of *Eleazar* the high prieſt, and grandſon of *Aaron*, was living. See chap. xx. 28.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN this hiſtory of *Micah*, we ſee how exceedingly the *Iſraelites* were corrupted at that time, and that they were exceedingly prone to idolatry; ſince *Micah*, who profeſſed to ſerve God, ſet up in his houſe a particular worſhip, and that, too, ſuperſtitious and idolatrous. From whence we may learn, how dangerous it is to forſake the worſhip which God has preſcribed in his word; and that men cannot but go aſtray when they ſet up ways of worſhip of their own invention. II. *Micah*'s great deſire to have a Levite in his houſe, and his opinion that God would bleſs him for that reaſon, is worth our notice. For though this perſuaſion was in him ill-grounded, becauſe he had ſet up in his family an idolatrous worſhip; we may, nevertheleſs, conclude from hence, that we cannot have too great a regard for the divine ſervice, and the holy miniſtry, provided it be performed in its purity; and that we ought to look upon this advantage as the ſource of all our happineſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE *Jews* of the tribe of *Dan*, being too much ſtraitened in the country they inhabited, ſent out ſpies to view the city of *Laiſh*, and took it afterwards, having conſulted the Lord by means of the Levite that was with *Micah*, whom they took away with them to be their prieſt.

REFLECTIONS.

FOR the right underſtanding of this chapter, and that we may make a proper improvement of it, we muſt make theſe three reflections: I. That thoſe of the tribe of *Dan* juſtly made war upon the city of *Laiſh*, ſince the inhabitants of that city were *Canaanites*, whoſe country God had given to the children of *Iſrael*. II. That the *Jews* of the tribe of *Dan*, before they proceeded to the execution of their deſign, conſulted the Lord by the means of a Levite, and deſired to have that Levite with them for their prieſt. Though theſe *Jews* ſinned in applying to a Levite who had ſet up an unlawful kind of worſhip; yet, we may learn from hence, not to undertake any thing without examining whether our deſigns are agreeable to the will of the Almighty; and to eſteem, above all other things, the advantage of ſerving God publicly, provided we do it in the manner he himſelf has ordained. III. We muſt obſerve on this relation, that although God did not approve of the worſhip ſet up by *Micah* in his houſe, becauſe it was mixed with idolatry; yet he vouchſafed to give ſucceſs to thoſe of the tribe of *Dan*, that he might bring about the deſigns of his providence. But this tribe did not make ſuch grateful returns for their ſucceſs as they ought, ſince they continued this idolatrous worſhip among them. Laſtly, We ſee by the whole

whole of this chapter, that the *Jews* were in great diſorder with reſpect to religion and morality. And the ſame is very manifeſt likewiſe in the following chapter.

CHAP. XIX.

THE ſin of the inhabitants of *Gibeah*, in raviſhing and killing the wife of a Levite; which occaſioned all the tribes of *Iſrael* to make war upon the tribe of *Benjamin*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory proves, that the inhabitants of *Gibeah* were a ſet of abandoned wretches, and that, in general, there was great diſorder and licentiouſneſs among the children of *Iſrael*. This was chiefly owing to their want of rulers who paid a ſtrict regard to the law of God, and their being ſuffered every one to act without control, as he himſelf thought fit. Thoſe who have been ſo happy as to know God, may grow very diſſolute and abandoned, when they forſake the laws of religion and juſtice, and are ſuffered to do it with impunity.

CHAP. XX.

I. THE reſt of the tribes make war upon the tribe of *Benjamin*, becauſe they would not deliver up the inhabitants of the town of *Gibeah*, who had been guilty of raviſhing and murdering the wife of a Levite, as mentioned in the preceding chapter. II. The iſſue of this war was, that the *Iſraelites*, after being twice defeated, took *Gibeah*, and made a great ſlaughter of the *Benjamites*, inſomuch that that tribe was almoſt intirely deſtroyed.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE reſolution taken by the tribes of *Iſrael* to make war upon *Benjamin*, becauſe that tribe refuſed to puniſh the infamous action committed by the inhabitants of *Gibeah*, proves, that though the *Iſraelites* were very diſſolute, yet there was ſtill among them ſome remains of zeal, and love of juſtice. II. Let it be obſerved, that they did not declare war againſt the *Benjamites*, till they had firſt called upon them to puniſh the criminals. This cool and prudent conduct, ſhould teach Chriſtians never to be haſty in ſhewing reſentment, nor make uſe of ſevere methods, till they have tried what can be done by remonſtrance and gentler means. III. Let us conſider, that although God approved of this war, and had determined to chaſtiſe the *Benjamites*, yet, becauſe the other tribes were not innocent, he ſuffered them to be twice defeated, to make them ſenſible of their ſins; and did not grant them the victory, till they had given marks of their repentance by faſting and humiliation. Thoſe whom God is pleaſed to give ſucceſs to, and make uſe of as inſtruments for the chaſtiſement of others, are often guilty themſelves, and have need to be chaſtiſed; and God does not diſplay his ſtrength, nor fulfil his promiſes, till men have ſincerely humbled themſelves before him. Laſtly, What befel the *Benjamites* for refuſing to puniſh the men of *Gibeah* for the horrid crime committed among them, ſhews, that the ſins of a few perſons may become the ſin of a whole people, and ſometimes expoſe a nation to great miſeries, when the guilty remain unpuniſhed, and are even countenanced by thoſe who ought to reſtrain vice and puniſh the tranſgreſſors.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

IN this chapter we ſee, I. The grief of the *Iſraelites* when they ſaw the tribe of *Benjamin* almoſt utterly deſtroyed. II. What they did to reſtore the ruined tribe.

REFLECTIONS.

THE concern which the *Iſraelites* expreſſed at the havock made among their brethren of the tribe of *Benjamin*, in their late defeat, ſhould teach us never to rejoice at any advantage we gain, when others ſuffer by it, though they ſhould have brought the evil upon themſelves by their own fault. This hiſtory does likewiſe inſtruct us, never to give way to reſentment, how juſt ſoever it may appear, nor to chaſtiſe the guilty with too great ſeverity; leſt in our anger we do what we may have reaſon to repent of afterwards. This was the caſe with the *Iſraelites*, who, inſtead of uſing their victory over the *Benjamites* with moderation, made too great a ſlaughter of them; and when they perceived that one of the tribes of *Iſrael* was almoſt extinct, were deeply concerned at it. Laſtly, As the *Iſraelites* laboured to recover the tribe of *Benjamin*, humanity and charity require us to contribute all in our power to the relief and comfort of the miſerable, eſpecially of our brethren, and when the glory of God and the good of religion require it at our hands.

The end of the Book of JUDGES.

THE BOOK OF RUTH.

ARGUMENT.

This Book contains the history of Ruth, *a* Moabitiſh *woman, who being a widow, came into the land of* Judah, *where ſhe married* Boaz, *the kinſman of her firſt huſband. This hiſtory was committed to writing becauſe it ſerves to ſettle the genealogy of king* David, *who was the grandſon of* Boaz, *and conſequently that of our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt. *It is not certain what time the ſeveral circumſtances of this hiſtory were tranſacted.*

CHAP. I.

I. A Man named *Elimelech*, is forced by a famine to leave the land of *Iſrael*, and go into the country of *Moab*, with his wife *Naomi* and his two ſons. He there dies, and his ſons marry two women of *Moab*, and ſome time after they died alſo. II. After their death, their mother *Naomi*, hearing that the famine was at an end, returned into the land of *Iſrael* with *Ruth*, one of her daughters-in-law, who would not leave her.

RE-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

WHAT chiefly commands our attention in this chapter, is the virtue and piety of *Naomi*; who, when ſhe had loſt her huſband and her two ſons in a ſtrange country, preſerved a tender affection for her two daughters-in-law, though they were women of *Moab*; and bore with patience and reſignation the ſeveral afflictions with which the Lord was pleaſed to viſit her, in the loſs of her huſband and her ſons; and returned into her own country as ſoon as ſhe could, to worſhip God according to the law. The ſentiments of *Ruth* are likewiſe very remarkable, who would not leave *Naomi*, and even declared ſhe would embrace her religion, and worſhip the God which ſhe worſhipped. This ſhews, that this woman, though a *Moabiteſs* and a ſtranger, was a woman of virtue, and had renounced idolatry to ſerve the true God.

CHAP. II.

RUTH, coming into the land of *Iſrael* with *Naomi*, her mother-in-law, at the time of harveſt, goes and gleans in the field of *Boaz*, the kinſman of her firſt huſband, who uſes her very kindly.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN this chapter we ſee, that *Ruth* and *Naomi*, who were very poor, providentially came to the field of *Boaz*, where they found proviſion. Thus God took care for the ſupport of theſe two women who truſted in him. II. It appeareth from this chapter, that *Boaz* ſhewed particular kindneſs to *Ruth*, becauſe he had been informed of her pious behaviour to her mother-in-law, and of her earneſt deſire to be joined to the people of God, which ſhe ſhewed in leaving the land of her nativity. This is

an evident proof that *Boaz* himſelf was a man of virtue, and married *Ruth* afterwards becauſe he had conceived an eſteem for her. And ſince it was *Ruth*'s reputation which occaſioned theſe marks of kindneſs from *Boaz*, we ſhould conſider *Ruth*'s good fortune as a reward of her prudent behaviour, and an inſtance of that bleſſing from the Lord which attends thoſe who ſeek him, and particularly thoſe who faithfully diſcharge their duty to their parents. *Naomi* too gave proof of her piety, in bleſſing the Lord for all the good things ſhe received from him, and for ſhewing mercy to her and her daughter-in-law, as he had done to her huſband and her ſons, who were dead. Thus let us bleſs God for all his mercies vouchſafed to us, and receive them as the tokens of his love.

CHAP. III.

RUTH, inſtructed by *Naomi*, her mother-in-law, let *Boaz* know that it was his right to marry her, as he was a near kinſman to her deceaſed huſband.

REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH the action of *Ruth*, ſet forth in this chapter, ſeems, at firſt view, hardly conſiſtent with decency: yet if we conſider the ſimplicity of thoſe times, it will appear at leaſt excuſable: to which if we add the virtuous character of the woman, the age of *Boaz*, the manner of his addreſſing her when he firſt perceived her, the teſtimony he bore to her prudence and good conduct, the public proceedings before the wedding, and the ſeveral other circumſtances of this hiſtory, there is not the leaſt ground to ſuſpect the virtue of either of them: and therefore, as there was nothing criminal in the whole tranſaction, ſo there can be nothing to countenance wickedneſs and licentiouſneſs.

CHAP. IV.

BOAZ called the neareſt relation of *Elimelech*, the huſband of *Naomi*, and aſked him, whether he would make uſe of his right of redemption, and purchaſe a field which had belonged to *Elimelech*, and marry *Ruth*; which he refuſing to do, *Boaz* purchaſed it, and married *Ruth*.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is to be obſerved, that *Boaz*, before he took *Ruth* to wife, applied to one who was more nearly related to her than he, to know whether he would make uſe of his right of redemption; and did not marry her till this man had refuſed to do it. This public proceeding before the judges, with all the formalities uſual on the like occaſion, proves the uprightneſs and purity of *Boaz*'s conduct. It appears likewiſe from this hiſtory, that the law given by God for the preſervation and diſtinction of families and inheritances was then obſerved. Further, the reaſon why this marriage of *Boaz* with *Ruth* is ſet down, is, becauſe *Boaz* was the great grandfather of king *David*, as we find by the genealogy at the end of this Book. And ſince *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord deſcended from king *David*, it is plain that *Ruth*, who was a *Moabiteſs*, is reckoned among the anceſtors of the Meſſiah, as well as *Rahab* the *Canaanite*; which St. *Matthew* expreſsly takes notice of in the firſt chapter of his goſpel, where he ſets down the genealogy of *Jeſus Chriſt*. We ſhould conſider, laſtly, that God thought fit theſe two women, who were ſtrangers, ſhould be united to his people *Iſrael* by marriage, to ſhew that the Gentiles, and ſtrangers to the commonwealth of *Iſrael*, ſhould be one day received into covenant with him; which accordingly came to paſs after the coming of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*.

The end of the Book of RUTH.

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL.

ARGUMENT.

In the First Book of Samuel *we see the state and condition of the people of* Israel *under the government of* Eli, *who was the fourteenth judge; under that of* Samuel, *who was the fifteenth and last; and under the reign of* Saul, *who was the first king of* Israel.

CHAP. I.

IN this first chapter is contained the history of the birth of *Samuel.* I. *Elkanah* his father, and *Hannah* his mother, going to *Shiloh* to worship there, *Hannah* besought the Lord to give her a son, and promised to devote him to his service. II. Some time after *Samuel* was born; and when he was weaned, his mother carried him to *Shiloh*, to fulfil her vow; when she presented him to *Eli* the high priest, and dedicated him to God for his whole life.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

WE observe in this chapter, I. That there was something extraordinary in the birth of *Samuel*; as his mother *Hannah* was barren, and obtained

tained him by her prayers and vows; which ſhewed that *Samuel* would be a perſon raiſed by God in an extraordinary manner. II. We obſerve the piety of that holy woman, which appeared in her prayers to God in *Shiloh*; in her humble and reſpectful anſwer to *Eli*, who accuſed her of being drunk; in the vow ſhe made to dedicate the child to God; and in the care ſhe took to fulfil that vow, carrying the young child to *Shiloh*. This is a noble example of piety and meekneſs; which is particularly calculated to teach parents, and mothers eſpecially, to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord, and devote them to his ſervice. III. The birth of *Samuel*, which was the effect of his mother's prayers and tears, ſhews, that God graciouſly accepts the prayers of thoſe who fly to him in their afflictions, and call upon him in the uprightneſs and integrity of their hearts, and with a pious intention. Laſtly, The judgment which the high prieſt *Eli* paſſed upon the mother of *Samuel*, who thought ſhe was drunk, is a warning to us, never to judge raſhly of our neighbours, nor condemn them only for ſome things which may appear wrong; ſince we may chance to pronounce ſome actions criminal, which are not only innocent, but even well-pleaſing to God.

CHAP. II.

I. IN the firſt part of this chapter, we have the ſong of *Hannah*, the mother of *Samuel*; wherein ſhe returns thanks to God for the birth of her ſon. II. In the ſecond, we ſee the irregular lives of the ſons of *Eli*; the weakneſs of their father, in neither reproving nor correcting them as he ought; and the judgments of God denounced by the prophet upon *Eli* and his family.

REFLECTIONS.

THE ſong of *Hannah*, the mother of *Samuel*, and her public and ſolemn thankſgiving to God at *Shiloh*, are a new proof of her piety; and teach us to expreſs our gratitude, and bleſs the Lord when he grants us any ſignal favour. We learn particularly in this ſong, that providence over-rules all things; that God confounds the proud; that he takes care of the weak and afflicted who fear him; that he protects them, and hears their prayers. This is a doctrine full of comfort and conſolation to good men, ſupporting them in their trials, and leading them to holineſs, and truſt in God. The account of the horrid impiety and ſacrilege of the ſons of *Eli*, ſhould convince us, that the looſe and evil lives of the miniſters of religion, is the greateſt of all ſcandals; that nothing corrupts the people more, or more certainly expoſes them to the judgments of God. The conduct of *Eli* next demands our ſerious attention; who, inſtead of puniſhing his ſons as they deſerved, only gently reproved them; and therefore God by his prophet declared, that, for this very thing his children and his poſterity ſhould be deſtroyed. This very remarkable example ſhould teach parents, that indulging their children is a very great ſin; that God puniſhes ſuch over tender and indulgent parents by the children themſelves; and that it often occaſions the ruin and deſtruction of families. But this indulgence is particularly ſinful in perſons of a public character, and eſpecially in church governors and magiſtrates, when they do not ſuppreſs vice and irregularity, oppoſing it with becoming ſteadineſs and reſolution, to the utmoſt of their power. God's ſharp reproof of *Eli* by the prophet, and the miſeries which ſoon after befel his children, and all the people, prove, that great misfortunes are owing to this indulgence, and that not only private perſons, but

but the public likewiſe, are thereby expoſed to the divine vengeance.

CHAP. III.

I. GOD appears for the firſt time to *Samuel*, who was then a child, and gives him notice of the ruin of *Eli*'s houſe. II. *Samuel* tells *Eli* what God had revealed to him; who, when he heard it, ſubmitted with reſignation to the will of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

THE inſtructions we receive from this chapter are, I. That as God made himſelf known to *Samuel* when he was very young, ſo he delights to manifeſt himſelf to thoſe that fear him; but particularly to beſtow his gifts and graces on thoſe that devote themſelves to him from their tender age. II. That we, with *Samuel*, ſhould hearken to the voice of God, what way ſoever he is pleaſed to reveal himſelf to us; and ſhould ſay always, like him, with all readineſs and humility, *Speak, Lord, for thy ſervant heareth.* III. The behaviour of *Samuel*, who at firſt was afraid to tell *Eli* what the Lord had ſaid unto him, but when he was called upon to do it, concealed nothing from him, is a beautiful example of modeſty, and at the ſame time of courage and reſolution. Let us be ever ſo loth to ſpeak diſagreeable truths; yet when we are called to it, neither ſhame nor fear ſhould hinder us from doing it. IV. What God ſaid to *Samuel*, concerning the ruin of *Eli*'s houſe, proves, that thoſe who do not ſuppreſs vice and immorality, without reſpect of perſons, are guilty of a great ſin, and often provoke the wrath of God in ſuch a manner, that nothing can prevent his judgments. V. The anſwer which *Eli* made to *Samuel*, ſaying, *It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good*; ſhews

ſhews that *Eli*, though greatly in fault, had however pious ſentiments, and acknowledged the juſtice of God in puniſhing him. Thus ſhould we ſubmit in all things to the will of God with a perfect reſignation, and humbly adore the righteouſneſs of his judgments, eſpecially when we have been wanting in our duty.

CHAP. IV.

I. THE *Iſraelites* make war upon the *Philiſtines*, and are twice defeated; and the ſecond time the *Philiſtines* made great ſlaughter among them, and took the ark of the covenant, which they had brought into the camp. II. The two ſons of *Eli*, *Hophni* and *Phineas*, periſhed in this war. *Eli*, at hearing the news, fell backwards and broke his neck; and the wife of *Phineas* died alſo.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things chiefly to be obſerved in this chapter, I. That the defeat of the *Iſraelites*, the death of *Eli*'s ſons, and of *Eli* himſelf, were proofs of God's wrath againſt the people of *Iſrael*, and the family of *Eli*, and the completion of thoſe threatnings which had been denounced by God againſt that prieſt. The threatnings of the Lord never fail to be executed; and ſooner or later his judgments fall upon a guilty people, upon families where vice prevails, and eſpecially upon the miniſters of religion who neglect their duty, and diſgrace their character by their irregular lives. II. What befel the *Iſraelites* deſerves a particular attention. When they were defeated the firſt time, they thought, that if they brought the ark into the camp they ſhould be conquerors. When the ark came, they were filled with joy and confidence, and the *Philiſtines* were greatly

greatly alarmed. But this did not prevent the *Iſraelites* from being again defeated; nay, God even permitted thoſe idolatrous people to take the ark, which was the moſt expreſs token of his preſence among his people. To pretend to confidence in God, when we are actually rebelling againſt him, is mere raſhneſs and hypocriſy; for neither the covenant of God, nor the ſigns and ſeals of his covenant, can ſecure from divine vengeance thoſe who provoke him by their ſins.

CHAP. V.

THE *Philiſtines* having placed the ark of the covenant in the temple of their idol *Dagon*, that idol was thrown down and broken in pieces; and the *Philiſtines* were ſo tormented by a diſeaſe which God inflicted upon them, and by mice, which laid waſte their country, that after they had carried the ark to ſeveral places, they were forced at laſt to ſend it back to the land of *Iſrael*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE muſt conſider here, that if the ark of the covenant was taken by the *Philiſtines*, and even carried into the temple of *Dagon*; God permitted this ſtrange event, to ſhew how much he was provoked againſt the *Iſraelites*, and at the ſame time to give the *Philiſtines* in their own country proofs of his power. The idol *Dagon* actually fell, and was broke in pieces before the ark; the *Philiſtines* were afflicted with a ſore diſeaſe; and beſides this, the mice made great havock in their country. And as they had the ark carried to another city, to ſee whether the ſame misfortunes would befal them, God continued his hand heavy upon them. All this happened to prevent the *Philiſtines* from inſulting the God

God of *Iſrael* becauſe they had taken his ark and defeated his people; and to convince them, that the gods they worſhipped were weak and dead idols, and the God of *Iſrael* the only true and almighty God. Thus does God ſecure his own glory: and if he ſuffers ſometimes his enemies to get the better, and things to fall out which ſeem to interfere with his glory, he at laſt exerts his power to the confuſion of thoſe that offend him, and to the honour of his holy name.

CHAP. VI.

I. THE *Philiſtines* ſend back the ark of the covenant into the land of *Iſrael*, that they might be delivered from the plagues with which they were ſmitten; and with it an offering, which was a memorial of what had happened to them. II. The ark being brought to *Beth-ſhemeſh*, God ſlew many of that place for touching it, and preſuming to look into it. III. From *Beth-ſhemeſh* the ark was ſent to *Kirjath-jearim*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE reading of this chapter ſhews, that the triumph of the *Philiſtines* was of a very ſhort duration; ſince God did not ſuffer his ark to ſtay long with them, and forced them to ſend it back with an offering; which expreſſed their dread of the God of *Iſrael*, and was a ſolemn acknowledgment of his power, and a memorial of the plagues with which he had ſmitten them. Thus did God confound the *Philiſtines*, and made them much more ſenſible of his power, after they had taken the ark, then he would have done if they had not taken it, and the *Iſraelites* had not been conquered. Even when God ſeems to neglect his own glory, he in the end moſt

moſt ſignally and remarkably ſecures the intereſts of it, and ſooner or later obliges his enemies to acknowledge his power. II. We may learn, even from what the prieſts of the *Philiſtines* ſaid to that idolatrous people, to humble ourſelves under the afflicting hand of God, and to endeavour without delay to appeaſe his wrath, leſt if we grow hardened under his corrections, they fall heavier upon us, and we ſink under them. III. It is remarkable, that the *Philiſtines* reſolved to put the ark into a new cart, drawn by two milch-cows, and let them go without guiding them either way. They thought by this means to make another trial, whether the evils that befel them came from God; imagining, that if the kine went the direct way to the land of *Iſrael*, that would be an argument that they had been ſmitten by the God of *Iſrael*. God was pleaſed for their greater conviction to accommodate himſelf to the notion of theſe ſuperſtitious people, and by the intervention of his providence, in a manner ſuitable to the advice of their prieſts, manifeſted his power as they thought he ought to manifeſt it. IV. What befel the men of *Beth-ſhemeſh* for touching the ark, and looking into it, tended to produce reverence and fear in the *Iſraelites*; and to make them ſenſible, that if the Lord returned to dwell among them, they ſhould take care not to provoke him to wrath, leſt his preſence might become as fatal to them as it was to the *Philiſtines*. It is a great advantage to have God preſent among us in the ſigns of his covenant, and pledges of his grace and favour; but this engages us to reverence that holy and righteous God, leſt by offending him we expoſe ourſelves to his vengeance.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

I. SAMUEL exhorts the *Iſraelites* to be converted, and to put away the idols from among them; which they did, and at the ſame time kept a ſolemn faſt. II. After this they obtained a ſignal victory over the *Philiſtines*, by the interceſſion of that prophet.

REFLECTIONS.

THE victory gained by the people of *Iſrael* over the *Philiſtines*, after they had been reconciled to God by humiliation, confeſſion of ſins, and faſting, and had put away their idols, teaches us, that God is always ready to be appeaſed, as ſoon as men ſincerely humble themſelves and forſake their ſins. We ſee likewiſe in this hiſtory, that the people, terrified at the approach of the *Philiſtines*, had recourſe to the interceſſion of *Samuel*, who by his prayers and ſacrifices obtained a miraculous victory; and that the *Philiſtines*, affrighted and diſperſed by dreadful thunder, were ſo defeated, that they never more aſſaulted the people of *Iſrael* while *Samuel* lived. The greateſt bleſſing any people can enjoy, is to have wiſe rulers and ſuch as fear God; the prayers of good men, and of the faithful ſervants of God, are of great efficacy; and for their ſakes God often ſpares and bleſſes a nation. Laſtly, the care that *Samuel* took to adminiſter juſtice to the people, ought to be an example to judges and magiſtrates; and induce them to diſcharge the duties of their office with the ſame application, and the ſame integrity as *Samuel* performed his all the days of his life.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

IN this chapter we have an account of the change in the government of the people of *Iſrael*, occaſioned by the ill conduct of the ſons of *Samuel*. This people, who had been governed till then by judges, raiſed up by God in an extraordinary manner, having deſired a king, God was diſpleaſed at the requeſt; however, he ordered *Samuel* to appoint one, after he had warned them of the evils that would befal them under this government, and the treatment they ſhould meet with from their kings.

REFLECTIONS.

THE account here given of the ill behaviour of the ſons of *Samuel*, ſhews, I. That children born of godly parents do not always tread in their ſteps. II. That great evils befal a people, when thoſe who have the adminiſtration of affairs act unjuſtly, and are corrupted by bribes. III. It muſt be obſerved, that though *Samuel*'s ſons abuſed their power, yet the *Iſraelites* were guilty of a great ſin in aſking a king; becauſe by this behaviour, they ſhewed that they choſe rather to be governed by a man, than to be governed immediately by the Lord, as they had been till that time. Such is the ingratitude and uſual blindneſs of men, who miſtake the favours of God, and are diſguſted with them, and ſeek that which is to their hurt. IV. When the *Iſraelites* perſiſted in aſking a king, God ordered *Samuel* to ſet one over them; but firſt warned them by him of the many inconveniencies which would be the conſequence of this change of government. God, in love to men, makes known to them his will and their duty; and forewarns them of the misfortunes they will bring upon themſelves by

by following the guidance of their own will rather than his. But when they will not follow his wholesome councils, but are obſtinately bent upon their own reſolutions, he hinders them not. By which means God permits many things which he does not approve of; and men are always the authors of all the evils which befal them.

CHAP. IX.

THE hiſtory of *Saul*, the firſt king of *Iſrael*, begins here. In this chapter we ſee upon what occaſion *Saul* viſited the prophet *Samuel*, and how God revealed to *Samuel*, that he was to anoint *Saul* king.

REFLECTIONS.

THE chief obſervation we are to make here is, that God, who permitted the people of *Iſrael* to have a king over them, did not leave them at liberty to take whom they pleaſed, but would give them one himſelf. To this end he interpoſed, by a very particular act of providence, in this event. *Saul*, whilſt he was ſeeking his father's aſſes, applied himſelf to the prophet *Samuel*; and God revealed to the prophet that *Saul* was to be their king. Thus God conducted *Saul* to *Samuel*, without either of them knowing what was to come to paſs; that the eſtabliſhment of *Saul* might appear to be the Lord's doing, and the *Iſraelites* might know, that though they had ſinned in aſking a king, God did, nevertheleſs, take care of them. God diſpoſes all things to bring about the execution of his deſigns, and brings them about by ways which men think not of: his providence preſides over all things; and, in particular, by him kings rule; and conſequently we ought to ſubmit ourſelves to them.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

I. SAMUEL anoints *Saul* king; and to convince him that he was called by God to that office, he foretels him of three things that ſhould happen to him. II. Having aſſembled all the people at *Mizpeh*, he nominates and appoints *Saul* to be their king.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is chiefly to be conſidered on this chapter is, that *Samuel* the prophet, to convince *Saul* that God had choſen him to rule over his people, gave him three ſigns; foretelling ſeveral remarkable things that would happen to him, and particularly that he ſhould be inſpired with the ſpirit of God. Beſides this, God confirmed *Saul*'s call to the kingly office, by cauſing the lot to fall on him; after which he was publicly declared king in the preſence of all the people. All theſe ſtrange things came to paſs, that *Saul*, who could hardly believe God would make him king over his people, might be fully perſuaded of the truth of it, and no longer doubt of the divine aſſiſtance; and that all the people might know that God had ſet him over them. So that in this hiſtory we ſee viſible marks of the goodneſs of the Lord to the *Iſraelites*, and to *Saul*, as well as a proof of God's omniſcience, and of his ſovereign power in diſpoſing all events. It is likewiſe to be obſerved in what happened to *Saul*, that when God calls any one, he grants him all neceſſary gifts for the diſcharge of the duties of his calling; and that if *Saul* had not fallen into diſobedience, he would have continually enjoyed the divine favour and benediction. Thus it is with all thoſe who are called by God, and prevented by his grace; they

have it in their power to ſecure and preſerve the great privileges they enjoy; and if they loſe them, it is becauſe they perſevere not, but abuſe the grace of God, and diſobey the heavenly call.

CHAP. XI.

THERE are two parts in this chapter. I. An account of *Saul*'s defeat of the *Ammonites*. II. His clemency towards thoſe that would not own him for king.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three reflections to be made on this chapter: I. That as the king of the *Ammonites* had unjuſtly attacked the children of *Iſrael*, and impoſed on them the moſt ſhameful and barbarous conditions; God puniſhed the haughtineſs and cruelty of that prince, and proved that his providence humbles the proud and thoſe who oppreſs others. II. That the beginning of *Saul*'s reign was very happy and glorious; ſince God made uſe of him to deſtroy the *Ammonites*, and deliver the men of *Jabeſh*, who were reduced to the utmoſt extremity. This ſhews that God would have continued to bleſs this prince and his people, if they had not rendered themſelves unworthy of his protection by their rebellion. III. The moderation and clemency of *Saul*, in not ſuffering certain perſons to be put to death who had at firſt refuſed to own him for king, proves that *Saul* had at that time good notions, but that he did not always retain them. However, this example ſhould teach every body, and particularly thoſe in authority, to avoid reſentment and revenge, and to pardon the offences that have been committed againſt them.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

I. SAMUEL being old, reſigns the office of judge into the hands of the king and the people, ſolemnly proteſting his integrity in the diſcharge of it. II. He reproaches the people with the ſin they had committed in aſking a king; and works a miracle which fills them all with terror and aſtoniſhment: after which he encourages them to ſerve God, and to perſevere in obeying him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE proteſtations made by *Samuel*, in the preſence of king *Saul* and the people, teach judges and magiſtrates with what integrity and diſintereſtedneſs they ought to behave themſelves in the exerciſe of their office; and that thoſe that do not juſtice, and who take bribes, are obliged to make reſtitution, and to remedy, as much as poſſible, all their unjuſt dealings. But the example of *Samuel* ſhews, that thoſe judges, who have conſcientiouſly diſcharged their duty, enjoy great comfort and ſatisfaction when they are going to give an account to God, the righteous judge of their adminiſtration. II. What *Samuel* ſaid to the *Iſraelites* on this occaſion deſerves our attention, when he repreſents to them the mercies they and their fathers had received from the hands of the Almighty, and their abuſe of them; that notwithſtanding their frequent rebellions, and the ſin they had lately committed in deſiring a king, God had borne with them, and delivered them out of many dangers, and was ſtill ready to bleſs them and their king, provided they did not again provoke him by their ſins. In all which we have very convincing proofs of the infinite goodneſs of the Lord towards men, and of his wonderful pa-

tience and long-ſuffering; and let us conſider what foul ingratitude it would be in us, if, after we have received from him favours much more excellent than thoſe conferred on the children of *Iſrael*, we ſhould fall into rebellion and diſobedience. III. *Samuel* ſaid to the children of *Iſrael*, that if they would ſerve God faithfully he would protect them; but if they ſinned againſt him, he would deſtroy both them and their king. Which teaches us, that ſtates, where religion and juſtice flouriſh and abound, are bleſſed of God; but that he never fails to puniſh princes and people who provoke him by their ſins. IV. We obſerve *Samuel*'s great tenderneſs and affection for the people. After he had been a long time their prophet and judge, he declared he never would, as long as he lived, ceaſe to pray for them, and ſhew them the right way. This grave and affecting diſcourſe of the prophet, expreſſes the ſentiments of all faithful paſtors and good magiſtrates, who have the moſt tender affection for thoſe committed to their truſt, pray for them continually, and never grow tired of ſhewing them the true and the right way, which they muſt take to be happy.

CHAP. XIII.

I. JONATHAN, the ſon of *Saul*, having ſmote the garriſon of the *Philiſtines*, they declared war againſt the *Iſraelites*. II. *Saul* offers a ſacrifice at *Gilgal*, without ſtaying for *Samuel*; which he was ſeverely reprimanded for by that prophet, who declared to him that his kingdom would not laſt.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee in this chapter, that as God had promiſed to deliver his people from the *Philiſtines* by the hand of *Saul*, he ſuffered the war to break

break out again between them. At the beginning of this war *Saul* and his ſubjects were much alarmed; but God granted them a victory by *Jonathan*, the ſon of *Saul*. But what we are chiefly to obſerve here is, the action of king *Saul*, who would offer a ſacrifice without ſtaying for the prophet *Samuel*. Now though this action does not appear at firſt ſight very criminal, and *Saul* even attempted to excuſe it, the judgment which God, who knew *Saul*'s heart, paſſed upon it, and the puniſhment that *Samuel* denounced againſt it, ſhew, that that prince offered the ſacrifice, not only through an indiſcrete haſte, but likewiſe out of a principle of defiance and rebellion againſt the commandment of God, *Samuel* having expreſsly forbidden him to ſacrifice till he came; beſides, that this proceeding of *Saul* might have been of bad conſequence, and an ill precedent for the people. God would have us always to adhere inviolably to what he commands, and not to depart from it upon any pretence whatever; we muſt never ſeek excuſes, nor make uſe of any pleas, when God commands; ſince nothing provokes the Lord more than the diſobeying his orders. Moreover, the rejecting of *Saul* ſhews, that thoſe whom God has choſen, and to whom he has granted particular favours, and who have made a good beginning, may loſe all thoſe advantages, if they render themſelves unworthy of them, and may be at laſt rejected by God as *Saul* was; which ought to keep even thoſe who have piety and zeal, continually within the bounds of humility and fear.

CHAP. XIV.

I. *JONATHAN* attacks a garriſon of the *Philiſtines*, puts all their army to flight, and gains the victory over them. II. *Saul*, purſuing the *Philiſtines*, cauſes all the people to take an oath that they

would eat nothing till the evening; but *Jonathan*, being ignorant of the oath, eat ſome honey in a foreſt; for which reaſon his father *Saul* would have put him to death, but the people hindered him.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are here to obſerve, I. The courage and piety of *Jonathan*, who reſolved to attack the *Philiſtines*; but before he put his deſign in execution, he gave himſelf a ſign, by which he was to judge whether the Lord would give him ſucceſs. II. The ſucceſs that God gave to his enterprize ſhewed, that this prince and his enterprize were acceptable to God; the defeat of the garriſon, and the earthquake, putting the *Philiſtines* into ſuch conſternation and diſorder, that they ſlew one another, and the *Iſraelites* made a great ſlaughter among them. Though God was provoked againſt *Saul*, he was pleaſed, notwithſtanding, to grant him this victory over the idolators, and upon that occaſion to deliver the people of *Iſrael* by the means of *Jonathan*, who was a virtuous prince, and one that feared God. God ſometimes grants his favours to perſons that are unworthy of them; not for their own ſakes, but for his own glory, and for the love he bears to thoſe that fear him. The oath which *Saul* made his army take, not to eat any thing all that day, ſuggeſts to us theſe four reflections; I. That this oath was taken raſhly, and had like to have been attended with fatal conſequences; which ſhews, that we ought carefully to avoid raſh and inconſiderate vows and oaths. II. The ſecond obſervation is, that God gave no anſwer to *Saul* when he conſulted him, and permitted *Jonathan*, who had not taken the oath, and was innocent, to be diſcovered by lot; to make *Saul* ſenſible of his ſin in making the people take a raſh oath, and to ſhew how much an oath ought to be reſpected and ſtrictly to be obſerved.

III. We

III. We may take notice of the conduct of *Saul*, who, though diſobedient to the commands of God, yet ſhewed a great zeal in forbidding the people to eat of the blood, and even ordering his ſon *Jonathan* to be put to death. This is the character of hypocrites, who judge ſeverely of others, and appear very zealous for the glory of God in ſome things; but do not judge and condemn themſelves, and in things of greater importance break the commandments of the Lord. Laſtly, God delivered *Jonathan*, and, after he had made him his inſtrument to deſtroy the *Philiſtines*, did not ſuffer him to be put to death. This ſhews, that we ſhould never condemn the innocent, nor commit any other act of injuſtice, under the pretence of vows or oaths, or any other conſideration, but ſhould rather defend and protect innocence upon all occaſions.

CHAP. XV.

SAUL making war upon the *Amalekites*, ſpares *Agag*, their king, and the beſt part of the ſpoil, againſt the expreſs order of the Lord; whereupon *Samuel*, without regarding *Saul*'s excuſes, declares to him that God had rejected him; and then ordered *Agag* to be put to death, and went away to *Ramah*, without ever ſeeing *Saul* any more.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are ſeveral things of great importance to be conſidered on the hiſtory that is related in this chapter. I. The firſt concerns the ſin of *Saul*, who, contrary to the order of God, ſpared the king of the *Amalekites*, and the beſt of the ſpoil; and the manner in which *Samuel* rebuked that prince for his diſobedience. From hence we learn, that it is never lawful to explain the commandments of God accord-

ing to our own fancies, nor to omit the leaſt part of them upon any pretence; but that we muſt obey, in ſimplicity of heart, all that God commands us, without ſeeking for reaſons to diſpenſe with them. *Saul* attempted to excuſe himſelf, ſaying, that he had obeyed the commands of God, and pleading his intention to honour God by ſacrificing the beaſts that he had ſpared. But the prophet rejected all theſe excuſes, and cenſured him very much for his diſobedience. There is no excuſe can juſtify us in the violation of God's command, made known to us in a clear and expreſs manner. This teaches us likewiſe, that it is in vain to pretend to honour God, when we depart from what he has commanded; that God does not regard the external homage we render him, whatever appearance of zeal it may carry with it, when we do not obey him; that obedience is better than ſacrifice; and that it is a ſin as great as idolatry to rebel againſt his word. III. We are to obſerve, that *Saul*, terrified at the ſharp reproofs and denunciations of *Samuel*, earneſtly intreated him to intercede for him, that his ſin might be pardoned, and to ſtay with him. But God was not moved with his expreſſions of repentance, becauſe his repentance was not ſincere, and the fear of being deprived of his kingdom, and falling into diſgrace with the people, were his chief motives. For this reaſon *Samuel* inſiſted upon it that God had rejected him, and would never ſee him any more. The ſorrow of the wicked is not always true repentance, it is often nothing but a worldly ſorrow; and therefore God, who knows the heart, diſregards it, and forſakes them when the meaſure of their iniquity is full.

CHAP. XVI.

I. THE prophet *Samuel* anoints *David* king over the people of *Iſrael*. II. *Saul* being troubled

bled by an evil ſpirit, *David* was ſent for to relieve him.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two remarkable events in this chapter: The firſt is the choice God made of *David* to be king; upon which we are to conſider two things: one is, that God ordered the ſame prophet to anoint him that had anointed *Saul*; that it might not be in the leaſt doubted but *David* was called to the kingdom as *Saul* had been: the other is, that though *David* was the youngeſt of the ſons of *Jeſſe*, God cauſed him to be anointed by *Samuel*, becauſe he was a man after his own heart, and took him from his ſheep to ſet him upon a throne. The inſtruction we receive from hence is, that God makes choice of thoſe who have a good and upright heart; and, as the prophet *Samuel* ſays, that *the Lord does not ſee as man ſeeth; that man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.* The other event related in this chapter is, that God permitted *Saul* to be troubled with an evil ſpirit, that is, by a diſmal melancholy; and that *David*, on the contrary, was filled with the ſpirit of God; and that God even made uſe of *David* to relieve *Saul* when the fit came upon him. By this means providence prepared the way for *David*'s elevation to the throne, making him agreeable at the court of *Saul*. Laſtly, The example of *Saul*, who, after he had received the ſpirit of God, was given up to an evil one, repreſents the ſtate of thoſe who render themſelves unworthy of the grace of God: they are deprived of it, and reduced to a condition ſtill more wretched; as our Lord has ſaid in the goſpel, *The unclean ſpirit enters again into them, and their laſt ſtate becomes worſe than the firſt.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

I. THE *Philiſtines* make war upon the *Iſraelites*, and a giant named *Goliath* defies the people of *Iſrael*, and challenges any one that would dare to fight with him; which no body had courage to attempt. II. At laſt, *David*, truſting in the divine aſſiſtance, offers to fight with *Goliath*, and ſlays him; and the *Iſraelites* obtain a great victory over the *Philiſtines*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE muſt obſerve here, I. That God ſuffered the *Philiſtines* to declare war againſt the *Iſraelites*, and *Goliath* to threaten and inſult them; that *David* might have an opportunity to make himſelf known, and to deliver the people of *Iſrael*. II. That none of the people durſt fight with *Goliath*, which ſerved to enhance the courage of *David*, and the glory of his victory. III. That *David* himſelf was not at firſt concerned in the war, and only went to the army by accident, his father ſending him to enquire after his brethren. In all this the particular hand of providence is viſible, which thus diſpoſed circumſtances for the exaltation of *David*, when he thought nothing of it; and from the way of life he had till then been engaged in, made him the deliverer of his people, and afterwards their king. IV. We muſt admire the reſolution and courage of *David*, who offered to engage *Goliath*, without being terrified by his threatnings, or diſcouraged by his own brethren; and above all, his great truſt in God, whoſe aſſiſtance he had already experienced. Laſtly, *David*'s wonderful ſucceſs in a particular manner engages our attention; ſince with no other weapon than a ſling he ſlew the giant, and obtained a glorious victory over the

the *Philiſtines*. In all which it viſibly appears, that God aſſiſted *David* in an extraordinary manner, and at the ſame time, that he was pleaſed to vindicate his own honour, which *Goliath* had attacked, and make thoſe idolators ſenſible, after a very ſignal manner, that he was the Almighty God. Thus alſo we ſee how God helps thoſe that truſt in him, and makes uſe of means in appearance very weak to bring down the pride of the wicked, and to deſtroy the powers which ſeem the moſt formidable.

CHAP. XVIII.

WE ſee here, I. The ſtrict friendſhip between *Jonathan* the ſon of *Saul*, and *David*. II. *David*'s great reputation at *Saul*'s court, and the acclamations of the people after he had ſlain *Goliath*, and thereby vanquiſhed the *Philiſtines*. III. *Saul*'s jealouſy on this account, which made him attempt to kill *David*, and endeavoured to make him fall into the hands of the *Philiſtines*, by promiſing to give him his daughter in marriage. Laſtly, The marriage of *David* with *Michal*, one of the daughters of *Saul*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN *Jonathan* the ſon of *Saul*, and in *David*, we have an extraordinary inſtance of a tender and ſincere friendſhip; and this example is the more ſurpriſing, as *Jonathan* might expect to reign after his father *Saul*, and yet ſet his whole heart and eſteem upon *David*, without any regard to his private intereſt. A friendſhip is eaſily contracted between diſintereſted and virtuous perſons, and men of virtue and religion are always deſirous to be united to ſuch as are like themſelves. II. We ſee that not only *Jonathan*, but all the people had conceived an high eſteem for *David*; which appeared on their acclamations after his victory; which was ſo ordered by providence, to diſpoſe

diſpoſe the *Iſraelites* to ſubmit themſelves one day to *David*. III. *Saul* was extremely jealous of *David*, and conceived ſo violent a hatred againſt him, that he attempted to kill him: And when he found he could not ſucceed in taking away his life by his own hand, he endeavoured to make him fall by the hands of the *Philiſtines*, promiſing to give him in marriage his eldeſt daughter, and afterwards his ſecond daughter, upon condition he would make war upon thoſe enemies of God's people, and kill a certain number of them. This whole proceeding proves *Saul*'s extreme wickedneſs, and that he was artful, treacherous, and cruel; but from hence we learn likewiſe, that amidſt all the ſucceſs *David* met with, providence prepared croſſes, that were to ſerve him for a trial. IV. This hiſtory ſhews, that notwithſtanding all that *Saul* did to deſtroy *David* he was forced to give him his daughter *Michal*; that God bleſſed *David* every day with ſome new ſucceſs; and the ſnares *Saul* laid for him turned to his own confuſion and to *David*'s glory, and ſerved to endear him more and more to the people. Thus we ſee that nothing can hurt thoſe whom God loves; that he always watches over them for good; and all that the wicked undertake againſt them turns to their good and advantage.

CHAP. XIX.

I. JONATHAN endeavours to pacify king *Saul* his father, who was exaſperated againſt *David*, and prevails upon him to ſend for him again. II. But a little afterwards *Saul* attempted again to kill *David*, which obliged his wife *Michal* to convey him away. III. He flies to the prophet *Samuel*, where he is purſued by the meſſengers of *Saul*, and by *Saul* himſelf, but is wonderfully preſerved by God.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

JONATHAN gave noble proofs of his friendſhip for *David*, and of his virtue, when he uſed his utmoſt endeavours to pacify his father, and ſpake with ſo much reſpect and reſolution in behalf of his friend, to reconcile his father to him. By this means he diſcharged his duty to his friend, and at the ſame time to his father, by inſpiring him with more juſt ſentiments. Thus ought we to take the part of the innocent, when perſecuted unjuſtly, never to be backward in our good offices towards others, and to uſe all means to appeaſe thoſe that are enraged. The proceeding of *Saul* with *David* is an argument of a very corrupt heart; ſince, though he had promiſed, even with an oath, not to hurt him, he conceived a new averſion againſt him, after he had conquered the *Philiſtines* a ſecond time, and would have taken away his life. Perſons who are arrived, like *Saul*, to a certain pitch of wickedneſs, and are poſſeſſed with a ſpirit of hatred and jealouſy, ſeldom return to more reaſonable ſentiments; and though they ſometimes appear to be much altered, and grown mild, and inclined to forgive, their wicked temper ſoon ſhews itſelf. However, *Saul*, with all his malice, could not hurt *David*, and though he ſent men to take him in his own houſe, God ſecured him again from the danger that threatned him, by the means of his wife *Michal*. And when *Saul* himſelf purſued him to *Ramah*, the ſpirit of God came upon him, and he returned without doing him any injury. God has many ways to protect the righteous and innocent; ſometimes he ſtops the proceedings of the wicked againſt good men by calming their paſſions, and ſometimes by depriving them of the means, and even altering their will to hurt his children. This is a powerful motive to the faithful to hope in God, and confide in his aſſiſtance in all ſtates and conditions. *David*

vid gives thanks to God for his deliverance in the fifty-ninth Pſalm.

CHAP. XX.

I. *DAVID* being obliged to fly, complains to *Jonathan* of the injuſtice of *Saul* his father; and *Jonathan* promiſes him to diſcover the ſentiments of *Saul*, and to make them known to him by a ſign which they agreed upon. II. *Jonathan* having found that his father was bent upon deſtroying *David*, lets him know it; and they give each other new proofs of their affection, vowing perpetual friendſhip; and then, full of the deepeſt ſorrow, take their leave.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter, the friendſhip between *Jonathan* and *David* is the chief thing to be conſidered. *Jonathan* made another attempt to cure his father of his unjuſt hatred againſt *David*; and though his father repreſented to him that he would never come to the crown if *David* lived, he had no regard to his own intereſt, but continued to ſpeak in behalf of *David*; till at length, perceiving that *Saul* could not be pacified, and that his hatred and malice againſt *David* rather increaſed, he warned him of the danger that threatned him, and took his leave of him, after they had renewed their vows of eternal friendſhip, and ſhed many tears. In this hiſtory we ſee what are the duties and effects of true friendſhip. Here we learn, that true friends are a treaſure that cannot be too highly valued; that even after their death their memory ſhould be dear to us, and that our affection ſhould extend to their poſterity, as *David*'s did to *Meph boſheth*, the ſon of *Jonathan*. From what paſſed between *Jonathan* and *David*, it appears that *Jonathan* was perſuaded *David* would one day ſit upon the throne;

throne; and yet he was not in the leaſt jealous of him, becauſe he knew it was the will of God. Theſe ſentiments of *Jonathan* expreſs the greatneſs of his ſoul and give proof of his piety. True and ſolid friendſhip is founded upon virtue, and inſtead of being jealous of the advantages of our friends, makes their happineſs our joy and ſatisfaction. Let us obſerve, laſtly, that *Saul*, inſtead of growing cool, and hearkning to the wiſe remonſtrances of *Jonathan*, was the more enraged, and even went ſo far as to attempt to kill him. Thus this prince grew worſe and worſe; which is generally the caſe of thoſe who forſake God, and give themſelves up to their unruly paſſions.

CHAP. XXI.

I. *DAVID* flies to *Nob* to *Abimelech*, the prieſt, who gave him of the ſhew-bread, and the ſword of *Goliah*. II. After this, he retreats to *Achiſh*, king of the *Philiſtines*, where, being known, he counterfeited madneſs to ſave his life.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE begins the hiſtory of the perſecutions and afflictions to which *David* was expoſed after he had retired from the court of *Saul*, and by which God was pleaſed to try him before he aſcended the throne. There are two things to be conſidered upon *David*'s flight to *Abimelech*, the prieſt; one is, that God took care of *David*, and gave him aſſiſtance in his baniſhment: the other is a remark made by our Lord in the goſpel, upon *Abimelech*'s giving *David* the ſhew-bread, which the prieſts only had a right to eat of. From this example *Jeſus Chriſt* inferred, that the ceremonial laws were not of ſo great importance, but they might be diſpenſed with in caſes of neceſſity.

neceſſity. *David*'s counterfeiting madneſs, when he was diſcovered by the *Philiſtines* in the city of *Gath*, muſt be conſidered as a weakneſs not altogether free from ſin; ſince *David* ſhewed thereby that he did not ſufficiently depend upon the promiſes of the Lord. This is a warning to us, never to have recourſe to evil means, and to do nothing unworthy of our character to deliver ourſelves from the dangers which threaten us. However, though this means *David* made uſe of was not right, yet God permitted it to ſucceed; which ſhews, that he in mercy bears with the infirmities of thoſe who fear him. The thirty-fourth Pſalm was compoſed on this occaſion, and ſo was the fifty-ſixth.

CHAP. XXII.

I. *DAVID* retreats to the cave of *Adullam*; from whence he goes to the king of *Moab*, and afterwards into the land of *Judah*. II. *Doeg* accuſes *Abimelech* before *Saul*, for giving victuals to *David* and his men; which occaſioned the death of *Abimelech*, and of fourſcore and five prieſts, and the deſtruction of the town of *Nob*, where *Abimelech* dwelt.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this, as well as ſome of the preceding and following chapters, we behold *David* a fugitive, and forced to wander from place to place; but wherever he goes, we ſee him guided and aſſiſted by his almighty Defender. But what we are here chiefly to obſerve is, the wicked action of *Doeg*, who by his falſe reports occaſioned *Saul* to put *Abimelech* and eighty five prieſts to death, and to put the city of *Nob* to the ſword: on which we ſhould make the following reflections; I. That great evils are occaſioned by calumny

lumny and falſe reports; that therefore, none can have too great a horror and averſion to this ſin, and that the great, in particular, ſhould be cautious how they give ear to ſlanderers and flatterers. II. That *Saul*, giving credit to *Doeg*'s accuſation, condemned *Abimelech* and the other prieſts to death, without hearing what they had to ſay in their juſtification, or paying the leaſt regard to their character: another inſtance of his impiety and injuſtice. III. That, as *Saul*'s guards refuſed to kill the prieſts, we ought not to obey princes, when their commands are evidently contrary to juſtice and religion. IV. The fourth reflection regards the wickedneſs and cruelty of *Doeg*, who, when he had prejudiced *Saul* againſt the innocent, and found his guards refuſed to lay their hands on the Lord's miniſters, ſlew them himſelf. Such is the character of wicked men and detractors; they ſtick at nothing, and by their falſe accuſations lay themſelves under a fatal neceſſity of doing every thing to ſupport their calumnies, and deſtroy the innocent. V. It is to be remarked, that *Abimelech* had done nothing in the leaſt degree criminal, and yet it coſt him and the reſt of the prieſts their lives. God for wiſe reaſons ſometimes ſuffers the innocent to be oppreſſed; but in this particular event, we ſee God's denunciations againſt *Eli* the high prieſt and his poſterity accompliſhed; as *Abimelech* was of that family. Laſtly, It is evident that *David* was very ſenſibly affected with this misfortune, which he had been the innocent occaſion of; and his kind reception of *Abiathar*, the ſon of *Abimelech*, was a ſign that *David* had a tender heart, and is a leſſon to us, to be concerned for thoſe to whom any evil happens, eſpecially when we have been the occaſion of it. To the reading of this chapter we muſt add that of the fifty-ſecond *Pſalm*, where *David* expreſſes his deteſtation of this action of *Doeg*, and denounces the judgments of God againſt him.

CHAP. XXIII.

I. *DAVID* delivers the city of *Keilah*; and being warned that the inhabitants of that town would deliver him to *Saul*, he retreats to the wilderneſs of *Ziph*, where he had another interview with *Jonathan*. II. *Saul* having notice that he was there, purſued him, and ſhut him up ſo cloſely that he would have taken him, if he had not been obliged to return quickly, upon the *Philiſtines* invading the land of *Iſrael*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE circumſtances we are to conſider in this hiſtory are the following: I. That God was every where with *David*, even when perſecuted and a fugitive, ſince he made uſe of him to deliver *Keilah* from the *Philiſtines*. II. That *David*, fearing the inhabitants of *Keilah* would deliver him into the hands of *Saul*, aſked counſel of God; who anſwered, that they would deliver him. This particular is very remarkable, and clearly proves, that God knows what men will do, even before the deſign is formed. III. It muſt be remarked, in the third place, that *David* having retreated to *Ziph*, and the inhabitants of the place informing *Saul* of it, he would have been taken, if *Saul* had not been obliged to return haſtily to defend his own country againſt the *Philiſtines*. *David* was no where ſecure from danger; but every where met with perſons who either perſecuted or betrayed him. This is often the condition of thoſe whom God loves: but Providence procures them unforeſeen deliverances, and when they think their ruin inevitable, he delivers them in a way they little think of; as *David* experienced on this occaſion. Thus God preſerves his children, ſometimes by forewarning

ing them of the dangers that threaten them, and ſometimes by throwing obſtacles in the way of their enemies, to hinder them from executing their cruel and unjuſt deſigns. God was pleaſed to put *David* upon divers trials, before he ſet him on the throne, to make him more humble and more obſervant of his duty, as he himſelf owns in his *Pſalms*; where he ſays, "*That it was good for him that he had been afflicted*, and where he ſo often praiſes the Lord for happily delivering him from all his troubles. In the fifty-fourth *Pſalm*, we may ſee what ſentiments the deliverance God vouchſafed *David* at this time raiſed in his breaſt.

CHAP. XXIV.

SAUL purſuing *David* to the wilderneſs of *Engedi*, entered into a cave, where *David* had an opportunity to take away his life, but would not do it; which when *Saul* perceived, he acknowledged *David*'s innocence, and bleſſed him, and made him ſwear he would not deſtroy his poſterity.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory related in this chapter ſets before us a ſurpriſing inſtance of mildneſs and moderation. *David* had it in his power to kill *Saul*, his cruel and unjuſt perſecutor, and did not do it; he would not even ſuffer his people to do him any harm, and ſpoke to him with all the humility and reſpect imaginable. A good man never delivers himſelf by unlawful means; but uſes even thoſe who do him the greateſt miſchief with meekneſs and gentleneſs, and inſtead of revenging himſelf, returns all the good he can for evil. It is remarkable that *Saul*, notwithſtanding the hatred he bore to *David*, was ſo

affected with this treatment, that he wept, and was even forced to bleſs him, and to own that *David* was more righteous than he, and to declare openly that God would reward his virtue, and make him king. A mild, prudent, and gentle behaviour, is of great efficacy in pacifying thoſe who are the moſt prejudiced againſt us, and by humbling ourſelves we ſoften the hardeſt hearts. This ought to induce us the more to the practice of thoſe virtues, which beſides are ſo conformable to our calling and duty as Chriſtians, and which *Jeſus Chriſt* our bleſſed Redeemer has ſo expreſly recommended to us, both by his precepts and example. However, obſerve *Saul* ſoon changed his ſentiments, and again perſecuted *David*. The wicked are ſometimes moved with a ſenſe of their guilt, and confeſs their faults; but they quickly return to their former ſentiments, and harden themſelves in their wickedneſs.

CHAP. XXV.

AN account of the death of the prophet *Samuel*, and of the brutiſh manner in which *Nabal* received the people ſent to him by *David*; which made *David* vow the deſtruction of *Nabal*'s houſe; but he was pacified by *Abigail*, the wife of *Nabal*, whom he married after his death.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt thing ſeen in this chapter is the death of *Samuel*, who was, in his time, a great prophet and an excellent magiſtrate; illuſtrious for the holineſs of his life, his miracles, his great zeal, uprightneſs, and inviolable attachment to juſtice; remarkable for his tender affection to the children of *Iſrael*, and for ſeveral extraordinary and miraculous actions. The memory of this holy man ought

ought to be had in reverence in the church, his virtues to be made our example, and the miniſters of religion and magiſtrates ſhould propoſe him for their pattern. There are two reflections to be made on the hiſtory of *Nabal*: I. The example of *Nabal*, who by his greedineſs and churliſhneſs had like to have cauſed the ruin of his whole family, ſhould teach us, that covetouſneſs and ill-nature may bring upon us great evils; wherefore thoſe vices ought to be ſhunned, and we ought always to behave ourſelves with civility and good-nature. Beſides this, we learn from *Nabal*'s death, that avarice, anger, and drunkenneſs, are generally attended with fatal conſequences, and even ſometimes occaſion the death of thoſe who run into theſe exceſſes. II. The other thing here demanding our attention is, that *David*, offended with the proceeding of *Nabal*, and tranſported with rage, vowed to deſtroy him and all his houſe; which he would have done if he had not been pacified by the prudence and mild behaviour of *Abigail*. From whence we may learn, that it is dangerous to ſuffer ourſelves to be carried away by paſſion and reſentment; that wiſe and moderate counſels are the moſt ſafe; that oaths made in anger, and which engage us to any thing evil, ought not to be kept; that what is done in a paſſion, often occaſions repentance and remorſe of conſcience; and laſtly, that we ought to thank God when he keeps us from offending him, and from executing our evil intentions.

CHAP. XXVI.

SAUL purſuing *David* into the country of the *Ziphites*, *David* entered into his camp by night, where he could have ſlain him, and would not, though he was perſuaded to it; but contented himſelf with letting *Saul* know, that he could have taken

away his life; which ſo affected *Saul*, that he was forced to own himſelf in the wrong for purſuing *David*, and made him bleſs him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN this chapter we find *Saul* again purſuing *David*, and with three thouſand men going in queſt of him into the wilderneſs of *Ziph*; though but a little before he had acknowledged *David*'s innocence, and ſeemed reconciled with him. Wicked men ſeldom change; and the repentance and fair promiſes of thoſe who have arrived to a certain degree of wickedneſs, is very little to be depended upon. II. We have here a freſh inſtance of the piety and moderation of *David*, who, when he had a ſecond opportunity of killing *Saul*, would not do it. This proceeding was yet the more commendable in *David*, becauſe he had ſpared *Saul* once before; and this prince, though moved with his generoſity, ceaſed not to perſecute him as before. Let us learn from hence to avoid revenge, never to return evil for evil, and never to be weary of behaving ourſelves with gentleneſs towards thoſe perſons that treat us with the greateſt injuſtice, though they continue their evil machinations againſt us. From that action of *David* we may learn in particular to reverence kings and princes, that their perſons are ſacred, and that we ought to do nothing contrary to the allegiance we owe them, though they ſhould be wanting in their duty. Laſtly, The effect that *David*'s moderation had upon *Saul*, ſhews us, how powerfully innocence, meekneſs, and humility, work upon thoſe that would do us harm; and that the worſt of men are forced at laſt to declare in favour of the righteous. But ſuppoſing by this means we ſhould not be able to pacify thoſe that hate us, we ſhall ſecure

cure to ourſelves the divine favour; for, as *David* ſays, the Lord will *reward every one according to his righteouſneſs.*

CHAP. XXVII.

DAVID, as he could not truſt to *Saul*, and found himſelf no way ſecure in the land of *Iſrael*, retreats to *Achiſh*, the king of the *Philiſtines*, who gives him *Ziklag*; from whence *David* makes inroads upon the neighbouring people.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee in this chapter, I. That while *David* was a fugitive God took care of him, and procured him a retreat in the country of the *Philiſtines*, where his name muſt needs be odious; and that during his ſtay there he obtained ſeveral advantages over the neigbouring people, the enemies of *Iſrael*. II. We muſt remember, that as the people on whom *David* made theſe inroads were ſome of thoſe nations which God had commanded the *Jews* to deſtroy, *David* might lawfully make war upon them; and the more, ſince God had called him to it by making him king. However, *David*'s behaviour was not without ſin, when he told the king of the *Philiſtines* he was making incurſions upon the land of *Judah*, which was not true. So that this example of *David* does not authoriſe lying, falſhood, and deceit; and if theſe vices were to be condemned in a *Jew*, they are ſtill more unworthy of a Chriſtian; who, living under the law of love and truth, ought to be very far from lying, and at all times behave with candor, ſimplicity, and ſincerity.

CHAP. XXVIII.

SAUL being attacked by the *Philiſtines*, and finding that God gave him no anſwer, applies himſelf to a woman that uſed divination, and prays her to ſhew him the prophet *Samuel*. A ſpirit in the likeneſs of the prophet appears, which fortels his death, and the death of his ſons, and the defeat of his army.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory related in this chapter is very remarkable; we ſee here, I. That *Saul*, being attacked by the *Philiſtines*, would have enquired of the Lord, but the Lord gave him no anſwer. As it was then too late for *Saul* to conſult God, ſo there is a time when it is too late for ſinners to prevent their ruin. The deplorable condition this unhappy prince was in at that time, is a lively repreſentation of the ſtate of ſinners forſaken by God, and ripe for puniſhment. II. We ſee, that, when *Saul* was reduced to this extremity, inſtead of humbling himſelf before God, he fell into another ſin, having recourſe to a perſon that practiſed a damnable art, which he himſelf, agreeable to the law of God, had forbid upon pain of death. This proceeding of *Saul* proves, that he had not conſulted God with ſentiments of true repentance. This is the true character of ſinners, who fill up the meaſure of their iniquities; they grow continually worſe and worſe, they add hypocriſy to impiety, and commit new and greater abominations, at the very time the ſevereſt judgments are going to fall upon their devoted heads. III. As to the action itſelf of the woman which *Saul* conſulted, it is to be obſerved, that the art ſhe made uſe of was vain and ſinful; that ſhe

ſhe had no power to make the dead prophet appear; and that it would be the greateſt folly in the world to imagine that it is in the power of man to bring back the dead again, and get information from them of what is to come to paſs. Nevertheleſs, God ſuffered a body to appear in the likeneſs of that prophet, and to foretel *Saul*'s defeat, and the exact time of his death. God thought fit by this means to puniſh *Saul*'s impiety, and make the ſin he was committing prove the means of his puniſhment; and by this means it appeared likewiſe that his death proceeded from God. Thus God does ſometimes, for the trial and puniſhment of men, ſuffer error and deluſion to ſucceed, *that they all might be damned who believed not the truth.* Laſtly, we ſee in the perſon of *Saul*, and the horror he was in upon this occaſion, how wretched the condition of thoſe is who are forſaken by God. And ſince it is deſpiſing the voice of God, and being hardened in wickedneſs, that brings men to this ſtate, we ought to fear bringing ourſelves into it through impiety and hardneſs of heart, as *Saul* did.

CHAP. XXIX.

THE chiefs of the army of the *Philiſtines*, that went to fight with the *Iſraelites*, having obſerved, in the review of their army, that *David* and his men were with them, obliged *Achiſh* their king to ſend him back to *Ziklag*, for fear he ſhould join the *Iſraelites* againſt the *Philiſtines*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE chief conſideration we have to make here is, that *David* being engaged to go to the war with the *Philiſtines* againſt the *Iſraelites*, and finding himſelf thereby reduced to a neceſſity either of fighting

fighting againſt his own countrymen, or betraying the king of the *Philiſtines*; God, in kindneſs to *David*, delivered him from the temptation to which he would have been expoſed, by permitting the chiefs of the army of the *Philiſtines* to require him to be ſent away. The proceeding of *David* on this occaſion was not conſiſtent with ſincerity, as he had made the king of the *Philiſtines* believe he would fight with them againſt the *Iſraelites*. However, Providence delivered him from all theſe difficulties, by the *Philiſtines* themſelves inſiſting upon his return: by which means *David* was kept from the commiſſion of ſin; from having any ſhare in the defeat of the *Iſraelites*; and from being in the engagement where *Saul* was killed; and was in a condition to deliver the town of *Ziklag*, which had been ſurpriſed in his abſence by the *Amalekites*, as appears in the following chapter. Thus Providence diſpoſes events for the good of thoſe whom God loves, and the Lord gives them a happy iſſue out of the moſt dangerous and diſagreeable circumſtances; prevents their falling into ſin, and delivers them from the temptations which they would not have had ſtrength to withſtand.

CHAP. XXX.

I. *DAVID* arriving at *Ziklag*, finds the town burnt, and his wives carried away priſoners, with all the people that were in it. II. Being informed that the *Amalekites* had done this miſchief, he purſues them, recovers what they had taken, and likewiſe great ſpoils from them, which were divided between thoſe who went out to the war, and thoſe that remained in the camp with the baggage.

REFLECTIONS.

UPON this hiſtory we may make the following reflections; I. That the city of *Ziklag*, which belonged to *David*, was taken by the *Amalekites*, with the people that were in it; and that *David*, at his return, had like to have been ſtoned by the people. This was a very ſevere trial for *David*; but it was the laſt he was to undergo before he aſcended the throne. II. *David*, upon this occaſion, ſhewed his piety in conſulting the Lord to know what he was to do: and God having ordered him to purſue the *Amalekites*, he recovered all that they had taken away, delivered his wives, and took likewiſe from them a conſiderable booty. By which means the evil that befel *David* turned to his advantage and to his greater glory; and thus thoſe who in their troubles make the will of God their rule and guide, never fail to experience his favour and protection.

CHAP. XXXI.

THIS chapter contains an account of the defeat of the *Iſraelites* by the *Philiſtines*, and of the death of *Saul* and his ſons, whoſe bodies were hung upon the walls of *Beth-ſhan*; but were afterwards buried by the inhabitants of *Jabeſh*. Here ends the hiſtory of *Saul*, and the Firſt Book of *Samuel*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE death of *Saul* deſerves very ſeriouſly to be attended to. The circumſtances of *Saul*'s death were extremely tragical, as he was the cauſe of it himſelf; as his three ſons were ſlain in the battle by the *Philiſtines*, and his body, and the bodies

bodies of his ſons, were treated with the utmoſt ignominy and contempt, the *Philiſtines* hanging them upon the walls of the city *Beth-ſhan*. The ſcripture obſerves, that *Saul* died thus becauſe he had not obeyed the commandment of the Lord; and in particular, becauſe he had conſulted the woman at *Endor* that had a familiar ſpirit. Thus this prince, who had been choſen by God, and had begun ſo well, made a miſerable end; and the threatnings denounced againſt him by God, on ſeveral occaſions, were put in execution. Thus it always has been and always will be with the divine denunciations, whether againſt particular perſons, or ſinners in general. This event ought to inſpire us with a wholeſome fear, and make us own that thoſe whom God has enriched with favours, and who abuſe them, are at laſt abandoned by him, and made examples of his indignation. II. When we ſee the ſons of *Saul*, and in particular *Jonathan*, a man of ſo much piety and virtue, periſh with him, we muſt remember, that the innocent are ſometimes involved with the guilty in temporal judgments; which God does for juſt reaſons, particularly to make good men happy by taking them out of this world. III. We have ſeen, on this occaſion, that the people of *Iſrael* were beaten by the *Philiſtines*, God having thought fit to chaſtiſe that people in proportion as he puniſhed *Saul*. For the ſame reaſon, God makes his judgments to fall upon the people, as well as upon princes; in which we have reaſon to adore the juſtice, the wiſdom, and the goodneſs of God.

The end of the Firſt Book of SAMUEL.

THE

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL.

ARGUMENT.

In the Second Book of Samuel, *we have the history of the reign of* David, *which contains the space of about forty years.*

CHAP. I.

I. DAVID receives news of the death of *Saul*, and the defeat of the *Israelites* by the *Philistines*. II. He puts to death the person who had taken away *Saul*'s life. III. He laments his death, and the death of *Jonathan*.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. HERE let us make this general reflection; that *David*, having waited till God thought fit to deliver him from the unjust persecutions of *Saul*, and to give him the kingdom of *Israel*, without impatience, and without attempting to make use of any unlawful means to deliver himself; Providence directed events in such a manner, that *Saul* died without *David*'s contributing in the least towards it; so that *David* ascended the throne innocently and lawfully.

Whatever

Whatever condition we are in, we muſt reſign ourſelves to the guidance of Providence, and calmly wait, without doing any thing contrary to juſtice and a good conſcience, till the deſigns of Providence are brought about. II. The action of *David* in putting to death the man who brought him the news of *Saul*'s death, is to be conſidered as an act of juſtice; ſince that perſon could not, without a crime, kill that prince, and ought rather to have uſed all poſſible means to preſerve his life. III. We may obſerve here the piety and the honeſt heart of *David*, who on this occaſion behaved with the ſame temper he had done in *Saul*'s life-time, and was ſo much concerned at his death, though it ſecured him from any further perſecutions, and cauſed him to aſcend the throne. Thus does every man of ſincere piety and ſolid virtue behave: Whatever injuries his enemies have done him, how wicked ſoever their lives have been, and though the advantages ariſing from their misfortunes be ever ſo great, he never rejoices, but is rather grieved at them. IV. In *David*'s lamentation upon the death of *Jonathan*, his dear friend, we ſee the character of true friendſhip. Sincere and virtuous friends, ſuch as *Jonathan* was with reſpect to *David*, are the greateſt bleſſings, except the grace and love of God, which we can enjoy in this world; and the greateſt loſs which we can ſuſtain, is to be deprived of them.

CHAP. II.

I. *SAUL* being dead, *David* is acknowledged king by the tribe of *Judah*; and thanks the men of *Jabeſh* for burying *Saul* and his ſons. II. *Abner* ſets up *Iſh-boſheth* the ſon of *Saul*, for king over the other tribes. III. This gave occaſion to a war, in which thoſe that joined *Iſh-boſheth* were defeated

feated by the people of *David*, and *Abner* killed *Aſahel* the brother of *Joab*, general of king *David*'s army: after which the two armies retired.

REFLECTIONS.

I. *DAVID* gave proof of his piety, and the reſpect he bore to *Saul*, even after his death, in returning thanks to the people of *Jabeſh* for interring the bodies of *Saul* and his ſons. II. God, according to his promiſes, ſet *David* upon the throne when *Saul* was dead; but he did not reign at firſt over all the tribes of *Iſrael*, and was even obliged to carry on a war ſeveral years againſt the houſe of *Saul*; in which he ſeveral times gained the advantage. God was pleaſed to exerciſe *David* with new trials, before he made him enjoy that reſt and proſperity which he had promiſed him; which he did to make him the more ſenſible of his dependence upon God for the kingdom. This repreſents the ſtate of the children of God in this world, and the conduct of Providence towards them. He has made them great and precious promiſes, and never fails to fulfil them; but he expoſes them firſt to many trials, and at length he fully accompliſhes all that he has promiſed. What *Abner* did to *Aſahel*, to prevent his being under a neceſſity of killing him, teaches us to avoid, as much as we are able, doing evil to another, and eſpecially ſhedding blood. The ſame is again remarkable in the cool and prudent behaviour of *Abner*, who did all he could to prevent the two armies from engaging again, and purſuing each other. Chriſtians ſhould be ſtill more ready and deſirous to put an end to wars, and to prevent the effuſion of the blood of their Chriſtian brethren, and to procure upon all occaſions a reconciliation, and reſtore peace and concord.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

HERE we have, I. The names of the childre that were born to *David* in *Hebron*. II. An account how *Abner*, who was general of the army of *Iſh-boſheth* the ſon of *Saul*, and who till then had made war againſt *David*, forſook the party of *Iſh-boſheth* to join that of *David*. III. *Joab*, the general of *David*'s army, being angry at this, and jealous of *Abner*, ſlew him treacherouſly, to revenge the death of his brother *Aſahel*, whom *Abner* had killed. IV. *David* being informed what *Joab* had done, was greatly diſpleaſed with it; but could not at that time puniſh *Joab*, becauſe his authority was not ſufficiently confirmed.

REFLECTIONS.

I. OUR firſt reflection is, that *David* having married ſeveral wives, according to the cuſtom introduced among the *Jews*, contrary to the firſt inſtitution of marriage, and having had ſeveral children by them; theſe children were the occaſion afterwards of many misfortunes in his family, and inſtruments in God's hand to puniſh him. Theſe were the uſual conſequences of the evil cuſtom of having ſeveral wives; and this conſideration proves, that the laws of marriage, which *Jeſus Chriſt* has reſtored to the purity of their firſt inſtitution, are very juſt, and highly neceſſary to the happineſs of mankind. II. The ſecond reflection is, that *Abner*, provoked at the reproach of *Iſh-boſheth*, embraced *David*'s party, and adviſed the reſt of the tribes of *Iſrael* to ſubmit to him. Upon which we are to obſerve, that *Abner* was far from being a good man; and though he pleaded, in behalf of *David*, the divine appointment, he declared for him rather out of reſentment

ment againſt *Iſh-boſheth*, and to inſinuate himſelf into *David*'s favour, than from a principle of duty, and in obedience to the divine appointment. Men who act upon unworthy motives conceal their paſſions, if they can, under the maſk of religion; and conform to the commands of God only as it ſuits their intereſt. God knows their hypocriſy, and their principles of action; but lets them alone, and brings about by their means the deſigns of his providence. Thus the Lord made uſe of *Abner* to accompliſh the promiſes he had made to *David*, that he would cauſe him to reign over all the people of *Iſrael*. However, *Abner* did not long enjoy the fruit of what he had done; *Joab* treacherouſly killed him, to revenge the death of his brother *Aſahel*, and without doubt likewiſe out of jealouſy and ſpite at ſeeing him ſo much in *David*'s favour: from whence we may learn, that the ſpirit of jealouſy, revenge, and reſentment, lead men to commit very great crimes. Laſtly, The curſes *David* denounced againſt *Joab* and his poſterity, ſhews us, that the poſterity of wicked and bloody men is threatned with the curſe of God; that if their crimes happen to eſcape the vengeance of men, yet God will not let them paſs unpuniſhed; and that he often puniſhes them in this life; as it happened to *Joab*, who made an unworthy end, as we read in the ſecond chapter of the Firſt Book of *Kings*.

CHAP. IV.

TWO of *Iſh-boſheth*'s captains ſlay their maſter, and bring his head to *David*, who, inſtead of rewarding them, as they expected, cauſed them to be put to death.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two reflections to be made on this hiſtory I. That though God was not the author of the ſin of thoſe two traitors who aſſaſſinated *Iſh-boſheth* their king, Providence permitted them to put their wicked plot in execution, to ſettle *David* in the peaceable poſſeſſion of his kingdom. The ſame reflection may be made on other ſins: God is not the author of them, and thoſe who commit them will be puniſhed for them; but his providence ſo over-rules and guides all things, that he makes even the ſins of men ſerve to bring about his all-wiſe deſigns. II. The behaviour of *David* is well worth our attention: it is a proof of his virtue and integrity, and of his deteſtation and abhorrence of treachery and cruelty, when inſtead of approving and rewarding thoſe who had killed their king, *Iſh-boſheth*, as they expected, he put them to death; though the death of that prince ſecured the kingdom to him. Kings and Princes ſhould never make uſe of wicked means to ſucceed in their deſigns, though never ſo juſt; and they ought to puniſh traitors and evil men, without having reſpect to their own intereſt: and this teaches us in general, that we ought not only to do no hurt to our enemies; but that we ought not even to rejoice at the hurt which may happen to them, without our contributing any thing to it, nor to countenance injuſtice and vice in any degree, how great advantage ſoever we may reap from it.

CHAP. V.

I. ISH-BOSHETH being dead, *David* is acknowledged king by all the tribes of *Iſrael*. II. He takes *Jeruſalem* from the *Jebuſites*, and builds the

the city of *David*, and has ſeveral more children. III. He receives preſents from the king of *Tyre*, and gains two victories over the *Philiſtines*.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD after he had a long time exerciſed *David* by divers afflictions, at length made him king over all the tribes of *Iſrael*, gave him a glorious victory over the *Jebuſites*, and over the *Philiſtines*, and made him to be had in great eſteem by the neighbouring princes. This happy concluſion of all *David*'s troubles ſhews us, that God is faithful to his promiſes; that, though he defers the completion of them, he never fails in the execution, but always delivers thoſe whom he loves; and that, after he has made his children paſs through divers trials, he at length grants them the reſt and proſperity he had promiſed them. Let us learn from hence to reſign ourſelves into the hand of Providence, in the mean time faithfully diſcharging our duty, ſince Providence is not now leſs vigilant for the happineſs and ſafety of thoſe that fear God, than it was formerly for *David*.

CHAP. VI.

DAVID is deſirous to convey the ark of the covenant to *Jeruſalem*; but *Uzzah* dying becauſe he had touched it, *David* has it placed in the houſe of *Obed-edom*; from whence, after three months, he cauſed it to be brought to *Jeruſalem* with great pomp, and great tokens of joy.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us attend to theſe four reflections, which this chapter preſents us with. The firſt is, that when God had put *David* in the peaceable poſſeſſion of his kingdom, his firſt care was to bring the

ark of the covenant to *Jeruſalem*; on which occaſion he expreſſed an extraordinary degree of joy, and gave proof of his great zeal in the preſence of all the people. In imitation of *David* we ſhould all have great zeal for the glory of God and his worſhip; but this is chiefly the duty of princes and magiſtrates, who have the honour and happineſs to know God. II. It muſt be obſerved, That God ſlew *Uzzah*, becauſe, inſtead of having the ark carried by the Levites, as God had expreſsly commanded, they had put it upon a cart, which occaſioned the inconvenience it was expoſed to; and becauſe *Uzzah* had touched it, and taken it in his hands; which none but the Levites had a right to do. But however, it ſeems as if *Uzzah* was ſtruck dead not barely on his own account, nor properly to puniſh him, ſince he had ſinned through imprudence, and what he did might be well intended. This happened chiefly to inſpire the *Iſraelites*, and *David* himſelf, with reverence for the ark, which was from that time to remain at *Jeruſalem*; and to teach them not to depart in the leaſt from the manner God had preſcribed to carry the ark; and to obſerve with great exactneſs every thing appointed for his ſervice. This effect the death of *Uzzah* produced in *David*; he was ſo terrified at it, that he was afraid at that time to have it brought to *Jeruſalem*; and when, three months afterwards, he had it brought thither, he remedied the firſt fault by making it be carried by the Levites. Men of prudence and religion improve by other mens misfortunes, and by the warnings God gives them. III. God bleſſed the houſe of *Obed-edom*, where the ark was, to encourage *David* to have the ark brought to *Jeruſalem*, which perhaps he would have been afraid to do ſo ſoon after the death of *Uzzah*. This leads us likewiſe to conſider the divine preſence and favour as the ſource of all true happineſs. IV.

The

The laſt reflection relates to the judgment which *Michal* paſſed upon *David*, when that prince danced for joy before the ark: ſhe thought he was acting in a manner unbecoming and unworthy of himſelf, and deſpiſed him. Thus worldly-minded men judge of goodneſs, and of thoſe who make profeſſion of it: what is highly commendable and agreeable in the ſight of God, they eſteem weakneſs and meanneſs of ſpirit. But the zeal which *David* expreſſed on this occaſion, and his prudent reply to *Michal*, ſhould teach all Chriſtians, and eſpecially perſons of rank and diſtinction, not to be aſhamed of piety and religion. The ſneers and wrong judgments of the ungodly and profane ſhould be deſpiſed and diſregarded when the honour of God is in queſtion: it ſhould be our greateſt glory to diſcharge theſe duties in the moſt perfect and moſt ſolemn manner. The ninety-ſixth, the hundred and fifth, and the hundred and ſixth Pſalms, refer to what paſſed on this removing the ark, as we ſee in the ſixteenth chapter of the Firſt Book of *Chronicles*.

CHAP. VII.

DAVID having formed a deſign of building a temple, the prophet *Nathan* acquaints him, that God did not think fit he ſhould put his deſign in execution; but informs him, that God would give him a ſon who ſhould perform it: for which *David* returns thanks to the Lord with great zeal, prays him to accompliſh that promiſe, and to bleſs his family and poſterity.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE pious intention of *David* to build a temple, as ſoon as he was in the peaceable poſſeſſion of his kingdom, teaches us, that we ſhould ſhew more zeal for the glory of God than for our

private intereſt, and that the beſt uſe we can make of the goods and advantages which God beſtows upon us, is to employ them for his ſervice and his glory. II. It is to be obſerved, that though the reſolution which *David* had taken was a pious reſolution and acceptable to God, the prophet *Nathan* informed him, that he ſhould not build a temple, but his ſon, whoſe peaceable and glorious kingdom would be better ſuited to this great undertaking. If God does not always think fit that deſigns, good and laudable in themſelves, ſhould be executed juſt at the time and in the manner we have conceived, he is nevertheleſs pleaſed with them, and rewards the piety and good intentions of thoſe that formed them. III. *Nathan*'s promiſe to *David*, that God would give him a ſon, whoſe throne ſhould be eſtabliſhed for ever, related in the firſt place to *Solomon*; but the words principally refer to *Jeſus Chriſt*, whoſe kingdom is everlaſting; which is the reaſon the author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* applies theſe words to *Chriſt: I will be to him a father, and he ſhall be to me a ſon.* IV. *David*, after he had received this promiſe from the prophet, returned moſt hearty thanks to God, offering up a moſt excellent prayer; which expreſſes his faith and firm dependence upon the promiſes of God, his great zeal for his glory, his joy and gratitude, and above all, his profound humility. In this prayer he likewiſe implores, with great fervency of devotion, the divine bleſſing upon himſelf and family. This example ſhould incite us to celebrate the goodneſs of the Lord towards us, with hearts ſincerely affected with his mercy, and a ſenſe of our own unworthineſs, and continually implore the divine favour and benediction with all the devotion we are able.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

I. *DAVID* gains ſeveral victories over the *Philiſtines*, *Moabites*, *Edomites*, and *Syrians*. II. The king of *Hamath* ſends *David* preſents, which he dedicates to God, with the gold and ſilver he had taken from the ſeveral nations he had conquered. III. At the end of this chapter we read the names of thoſe that were in the chief employments in the time of *David*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee in this chapter, that God continued his favours and bleſſings to king *David*; his glory was continually increaſing, and, as the ſacred hiſtory tells us, *God was with David, and proſpered him whitherſoever he went*. The king, on his part, acknowledged his obligation to God, for all the victories and advantages he had gained by his aſſiſtance; and conſecrated to him the ſpoils of the conquered nations. So long as *David* was zealous for the honour of God, and continued in the faithful diſcharge of his duty, God defended and protected him againſt his enemies, and bleſſed him with glory and happineſs; but the ſcene changed when he provoked the Lord by his ſins, as by the ſequel of this hiſtory we learn he did. Let us acknowledge the love and protection of the Almighty to be our happineſs and ſecurity; and that the way to ſecure his protection, is to continue faithful to him: Let us too learn, in imitation of *David*, who dedicated to God the ſpoils he had taken, to expreſs our gratitude for all his mercies, improving, as much as poſſible, to his glory, all the advantages we receive from him.

CHAP. IX.

DAVID remembering the promiſe he had made to *Saul*, and eſpecially to *Jonathan*, to take care of their poſterity, cauſes all the eſtate that belonged to *Saul* to be given to *Mephiboſheth*, the ſon of *Jonathan*, and commits the adminiſtration of it to *Ziba*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee here the care that *David* took of *Mephiboſheth*, the grandſon of *Saul*, and ſon of *Jonathan*, his dear friend; and how he gave him all that belonged to *Saul*. This conduct of *David* ſhews he was a man of great equity and uprightneſs, as well as kind and affectionate. He would not ſuffer *Mephiboſheth* to be deprived of what belonged to him; he preſerved, in the midſt of his proſperity, a tender remembrance of *Jonathan* his intimate friend, and religiouſly performed his promiſe of taking care of his family. From hence we learn, that promiſes ought to be religiouſly obſerved; that the duties of friendſhip are ſacred and inviolable; that true and ſincere friends remember thoſe they have had an affection for, even after their death; and that they expreſs their affection to them by their care of their poſterity. Laſtly, What *David* did for *Mephiboſheth*, who was left deſtitute, and withal weak and infirm, ſhews, that thoſe who are in proſperity ought to think upon thoſe that are injured and afflicted; and that we ſhould always be ready to comfort the miſerable, and to do good to all.

CHAP. X.

THE king of the *Ammonites* inſulting *David*'s ambaſſadors gave occaſion to a war, in which *David* twice defeated the *Ammonites* and the *Syrians*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to obſerve, upon what has been read,

I. That king *David* ſent ambaſſadors to the king of the *Ammonites* in a friendly way, but that this prince, liſtening to the evil counſels of his courtiers, thought theſe ambaſſadors were ſpies, and accordingly treated them with the utmoſt indignity. Here we may conſider, that what men of ſincerity do with a view to promote peace and friendſhip, is often taken ill and miſinterpreted; that men, void of virtue, judge of other mens ſentiments by their own, and aſcribe to them views which they themſelves ſhould have; that diffidence and falſe policy often make men take wrong meaſures; and that princes, and in general all thoſe who give ear to and follow evil counſels, expoſe themſelves to great misfortunes. As to *David*'s war againſt the *Ammonites*, it was very juſt, ſince their king had violated the law of nations, inſulting the ambaſſadors ſent by *David* to him to teſtify his friendſhip, and alſo becauſe the *Ammonites* firſt declared war againſt *David*. The event of this war, in which *David* defeated the *Ammonites*, with the *Syrians* who had joined them, ſhews that God favours perſons of integrity and an honeſt intention, and in particular that he aſſiſts thoſe princes that love peace and juſtice; and, on the contrary, that proud and unjuſt men bring the greateſt misfortunes upon themſelves by their inſolence and haughtineſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

HERE we have the hiſtory of the crime which *David* committed with *Bathſheba*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have now read the hiſtory of *David*'s great ſin in committing adultery, and then cauſing *Uriah*'s death. The ſeveral circumſtances of *David*'s fall, engage us to make the following reflections. I. That men eaſily forget God when they are in eaſe and proſperity, as *David* then was, and are expoſed to great temptations. II. That looks betray the heart, and kindle criminal deſires; and therefore, that men ought to turn away their eyes from every thing that may raiſe looſe deſires in the breaſt, as *Jeſus Chriſt* exhorts us in the goſpel. III. That it is our duty to ſtifle evil thoughts when they firſt ariſe in the breaſt; and that when they are not reſiſted they take poſſeſſion of the heart, and hurry men into ſin. IV. That uncleanneſs, which is a great ſin in itſelf, becomes more ſo by the conſequences which uſually attend it, and the new ſins which are committed to conceal it. *David*, inſtead of atoning for his fault by confeſſion and repentance, thinks only how to conceal it; for this purpoſe he tries very unworthy means; and at laſt, ſeeing theſe ſchemes did not ſucceed, he premeditatedly reſolves to have his faithful ſervant *Uriah* diſpatched in a baſe and treacherous manner. When men are once engaged in ſin, and have made certain advances in it, they never fail to go farther, till they have carried their guilt to its higheſt pitch. V. We muſt not look upon what *David* did at this time as one of thoſe ſins which good men fall into through weakneſs and infirmity, and which are not inconſiſtent with a ſtate of piety; it was a ſin of the moſt heinous nature, and the more

more ſo, as it was committed by a perſon well acquainted with his duty, greatly enlightened, and enriched with divine graces. We muſt not therefore imagine that *David*, in his fall, was in a ſtate of grace and ſalvation. If he had not recovered by a ſincere and public repentance, proportioned to the greatneſs of his ſins, he would have periſhed. So that we ſhould not make an ill uſe of this example; but, on the contrary, watch over ourſelves with greater care, and conceive an utter averſion to uncleanneſs; eſpecially, becauſe ſins of this nature are much more enormous in Chriſtians than they were in *David*; and that it is more hard for them to repent as they ought, and to obtain pardon for them.

CHAP. XII.

I. GOD ſends the prophet *Nathan* to *David* to reprove him for his crime. II. *David* confeſſes his ſin; and the child he had by *Bathſheba* dies, and *Solomon* is born ſome time after. III. *Joab* beſieges the city of *Rabbah*, and takes it.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we have ſeveral important inſtructions. I. That God, in great goodneſs to *David*, ſent *Nathan* to him to rouſe his conſcience, and to threaten him with his ſevere judgments. It is neceſſary God ſhould make uſe of ſome means to bring ſinners to repentance; which in his great goodneſs he does many ways, and particularly by the miniſtry of his ſervants. II. The behaviour of *Nathan*, who firſt propoſed a parable, and then openly reproved *David* for his ſin, and threatned him with the judgment of God, teaches us, that the miniſters of the Lord ſhould ſpeak to ſinners with prudence, in the moſt likely way to bring them to themſelves,

ſelves, and at the ſame time with courage, and without flattering them, or having reſpect of perſons. III. The confeſſion that *David* made of his fault, not only before *Nathan*, but even in the moſt public manner, as appears from the fifty firſt Pſalm, ſhews what is the character of true repentance. A true penitent, ſincerely concerned for his ſins, is not aſhamed to confeſs them; and that too in a public manner, if a public confeſſion be neceſſary to remedy the evil he has done, and the ſcandal he has given. IV. The pardon which *Nathan* aſſured *David* of, teaches us, that mercy and forgiveneſs are the conſequences of ſincere and humble confeſſion, when attended with amendment and reformation. V. It is, however, to be remarked, that God did not revoke the temporal judgments which he had denounced againſt *David*; and to convince him that thoſe threatnings would be executed, *Bathſheba*'s child died. Though God forgives truly penitent ſinners, and frees them from eternal torments, he does not always exempt them from the puniſhments of this life; there are ſome ſins in particular which he uſually puniſhes in this world, to keep up and improve in ſinners a ſenſe of their ſins, and make them an example to others. All the denunciations of the prophet were fulfilled, as we learn in the ſequel of this hiſtory. VI. *David*'s grief during the ſickneſs of the child, and his reſignation after its death, teach us, that it is very lawful to pray to God to remove affliction from us; but that when God makes us ſenſible he will not hear us, we muſt reſign ourſelves to his will; and eſpecially when we have brought the chaſtiſement upon us by our ſins. We may likewiſe learn from this hiſtory, that we ought not to grieve exceſſively for the death of perſons that are dear to us, and particularly for the death of children. Laſtly, The birth of *Solomon*, and the advan-

vantages gained by *David* over the *Ammonites*, ſhew that God was reconciled by his repentance.

CHAP. XIII.

AMNON, the ſon of king *David*, having raviſhed his ſiſter *Tamar*, ſhe retired to *Abſalom* her brother, who, at the end of two years, cauſed *Amnon* to be killed at a feaſt; after which he fled to the king of *Geſhur*, his mother's father.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is related in this and the following chapters deſerves to be well conſidered. In this we ſee, that though God had pardoned king *David*, he thought fit, however, to chaſtiſe him many ways, to prevent him from loſing a ſenſe of his fault, and to repair the great ſcandal he had given to his ſubjects. As he had offended God by adultery and murder, he was puniſhed by the inceſt of *Amnon*, and afterwards by his death; and his own children, *Amnon*, *Tamar*, and *Abſalom*, were ſcourges in the hands of God for his chaſtiſement. Great afflictions are abſolutely neceſſary for great ſinners; and generally men are puniſhed by ſins of the ſame nature with thoſe they had committed. Guilty parents moſt commonly meet with a puniſhment in their own families; and particularly, thoſe who fall into the ſins of uncleanneſs, have often children that are like them in that reſpect. To this general reflection let us add theſe three particular ones: I. We ſee in *Amnon*'s inceſt and its conſequences, that the unruly luſts of the fleſh often draw men into the moſt enormous crimes, and expoſe them to the greateſt miſeries, and that divine vengeance purſues thoſe who give themſelves up to ſenſuality and uncleanneſs. II. It is worth taking notice, that *Amnon*'s inceſt, and

and all the miſerable conſequences of it, were owing to the pernicious counſel of *Jonadab* his couſin and friend. This teaches us, that the counſels of falſe friends and flatterers, and of thoſe who humour our paſſions, are fatal to thoſe that follow them. III. The third reflection is, that though *Abſalom* was guilty of a very heinous ſin in killing his brother *Amnon*; yet God permitted it for the puniſhment of *Amnon*, and at the ſame time for the correction of *David*. Thus divers crimes are committed which God abhors and will ſeverely puniſh; and which he does not prevent, becauſe he makes uſe of the paſſions and wickedneſs of men to do juſtice, and to puniſh the guilty.

CHAP. XIV.

JOAB having aſked *David*, by means of the widow of *Tekoa*, to call back *Abſalom*, who ſince the murder of his brother *Amnon* had withdrawn himſelf; *David* gave him leave to return to *Jeruſalem*, upon condition he ſhould not come into his preſence; but at the end of two years, *Abſalom* obliged *Joab* to aſk *David*'s leave for him to appear at court; which he obtained.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we are chiefly to conſider the kindneſs of *David*, and his tenderneſs towards his ſon *Abſalom*; his kindneſs appeared in his being willing to pardon *Abſalom* the crime he had committed in killing his brother *Amnon*, and allowing him to return to *Jeruſalem*. Though the event proved, that *David* had been deceived in imagining *Abſalom* was returned to his duty, yet what he did was praiſe-worthy; and we ought, like him, readily to pardon thoſe that have offended us, eſpecially when they appear

appear concerned for their faults. On the other hand, this proceeding of *David* ſhews the evil diſpoſition of *Abſalom*; ſince, inſtead of being moved by the pardon his father had granted him, he made uſe of the leave he had to be at *Jeruſalem* to form a conſpiracy againſt him. No good is to be expected from men of a corrupt heart; they grow better neither by adverſity nor proſperity; and ſo far are they from mending, that they take occaſion from the deliverances God vouchſafes them to grow more wicked and put their evil deſigns in execution. Laſtly, We muſt here reflect upon the deſigns of Providence, and conſider that God permitted *Abſalom* to be recalled to *Jeruſalem*, to chaſtiſe *David* by the means of that rebellious and unnatural ſon, as will be ſeen in the following chapter.

CHAP. XV.

I. *ABSALOM* conſpires againſt his father *David*, and gets himſelf to be proclaimed king. II. *David* is forced to leave *Jeruſalem*, and to fly before his ſon. III. The prieſts, who would have followed him with the ark of the covenant, he ſent back again to *Jeruſalem*. IV. He likewiſe ſends *Huſhai* thither, to defeat by his means the counſels of *Ahithophel*, who had embraced the party of *Abſalom*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE firſt reflection this hiſtory preſents us with is, that God continued to purſue *David* with his judgments, and verified the truth of what the prophet *Nathan* had told him, that God would raiſe up evil againſt him out of his own family. *David* is driven away by his own ſon, and abandoned by the greateſt part of his ſubjects, and forced to fly from *Jeruſalem*; which muſt needs be a more

a more ſenſible trial to him than all thoſe he had already undergone. Beſides this, we may conſider here the wickedneſs to *Abſalom*, his ingratitude and inhumanity to *David* his father, who had forgiven him; the artifices he uſed to gain the affections of the people; and above all his extreme impiety, which appeared in his pretending to go to perform a vow to God at *Hebron*, whereas he went thither only to get himſelf declared king. Wicked men are capable of any thing; they make uſe of treachery, and even of the pretext of religion to execute their criminal deſigns. However, though *Abſalom*'s enterprize was abſolutely criminal and unjuſt, he had at firſt ſome ſucceſs; this ſometimes happens to the wicked and ungodly; but for all this, they do not eſcape the juſtice of God. III. We ought very particularly to take notice of the words pronounced by *David*, when he ſent back the prieſts with the ark to *Jeruſalem*: *If I ſhall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and ſhew me both it and his habitation; but if he thus ſay, I have no delight in thee; behold, here I am, let him do to me as ſeemeth good unto him.* This language ſhews with what profound humility *David* received the chaſtiſement of the Lord; with what reſignation he ſubmitted to the divine will, and likewiſe his zeal and cloſe attachment to the place where God was worſhipped. Thus ought thoſe whom God afflicts, and eſpecially great ſinners, to humble themſelves under his hand, ſubmit to his will, and eſteem themſelves unworthy of his favours. *David*'s prayer to God that he would confound the counſels of *Ahithophel*, ſhews, that the counſels of artful men, who are in great reputation for wiſdom, are greatly to be feared; and it ſhews too, that *David* had recourſe only to God in all his troubles; and that though he ſuffered the puniſhment due to his ſins,

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he ſtill truſted in him. Laſtly, *David* ſent *Huſhai* back to *Jeruſalem*, with orders to pretend to be of *Abſalom*'s party; and to endeavour to diſcover and defeat the counſels of *Ahithophel*. No doubt *David* might lawfully do this with reſpect to *Abſalom*, not only in quality of a king, but chiefly as a father attacked by his own ſon; eſpecially as he always preſerved a great affection for *Abſalom*, and did not deſign to injure him in the leaſt, but rather propoſed to hinder him from doing more miſchief, and to bring him to his duty again. This action therefore of *David* by no means authoriſes deceit, lying, and treachery. It appears from the third Pſalm, that *David*, in this extremity, had a perfect confidence in God, and truſted in his aſſiſtance.

CHAP. XVI.

I. WHILE *David* was a fugitive, *Ziba* obtains of him, by ſlander and deceit, a grant of the eſtate of *Mephiboſheth*, grandſon of *Saul*. II. *David* being inſulted by a man, named *Shimei*, ſhews great moderation, and an entire reſignation to Providence. III. *Abſalom* enters into *Jeruſalem*, and takes *Huſhai* into his ſervice.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are here to reflect, I. On the treachery of *Ziba*, who, to get his maſter's eſtate, came to *David*, and accuſed him of being in a rebellion againſt him; and on *David*'s credulity, who ſuffered himſelf to be impoſed upon by this falſe and ſlanderous accuſation. How dangerous a thing is it to give credit to reports, and to judge according to appearance! We ſhould never believe raſhly thoſe who accuſe others; and *David*'s haſty determination ſhews, that men of virtue may be over-

taken by prejudice, and commit great acts of injuſtice, unleſs they are upon their guard. II. In what paſſed between *Shimei* and *David*, we are to obſerve, on one hand, the crime of *Shimei*, who curſed his king, and treated him with ſo great indignity; and on the other, the patience and meekneſs of *David*, who, when he had it in his power juſtly to puniſh the inſolence of that wretch, and was even ſolicited to it, would not ſuffer the people to take away his life, but patiently underwent all thoſe affronts, and acknowledged it was God who had reduced him to the condition he then was in, and made uſe of *Shimei* to humble and to try him. This is the import of thoſe words of *David* on this occaſion; *Let him alone, let him curſe; for the Lord has ſaid unto him, Curſe David.* But this does not mean that God commanded *Shimei* to curſe his king, or that he inſpired him to do it. *David* thus expreſſed his ſubmiſſion to the divine will, his great meekneſs and his profound humility; acknowledging, that if *Shimei* inſulted him unjuſtly, God juſtly puniſhed him. This is a noble example, to teach us never to avenge ourſelves, nor even ſuffer others to avenge our cauſe; to bear with patience the evils and injuries that men do us; conſidering, that no evil befals us but what God permits, and what we have well deſerved. III. We ſee that God took care of *David* in the extreme danger he was then in, ſince *Huſhai*, his friend, was received by *Abſalom*, and by his means he could be informed of the deſigns which his unnatural ſon ſhould form againſt him. Laſtly, The ſin committed by *Abſalom* with his father's wives, is a freſh inſtance of the impiety and wickedneſs of this wretched creature, and, at the ſame time, a juſt judgment of God upon *David* for his adultery, and the accompliſhment of what the prophet *Nathan* had threatned him with, that God would take his wives

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and give them to one of his own houſe; and as *Abſalom* committed this deteſtable action by the counſel of *Ahithophel*, whoſe view was to ſupport the cauſe he was engaged in, and carry things to ſuch a length, that a peace between *David* and *Abſalom* might be utterly impoſſible, we learn how much evil may ariſe from wicked counſels; and what happened afterwards, both to *Abſalom* and *Ahithophel*, proves, that ſooner or later ſuch counſels are fatal to thoſe that give them, and to thoſe that follow them.

CHAP. XVII.

I. *Ahithophel* adviſes *Abſalom* to kill *David* only; but *Huſhai* prevents that counſel from being followed, and gives notice of it to *David* by *Jonathan* and *Ahimaaz*. II. *Ahithophel* finding his counſels were rejected, and concluding his own ruin was inevitable, in deſpair hangs himſelf. III. *David* goes over *Jordan*, and arrives at *Mahanaim*, where he receives proviſions from ſeveral perſons.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to obſerve here, that *Ahithophel*, having adviſed *Abſalom* to purſue after *David* while he was weary and weak, and offering himſelf to kill him, *Abſalom* approved of the deteſtable counſel, and conſented to the murder of his father. This horrid circumſtance proves, that this unnatural ſon was capable of every thing, and that he was filling up the meaſure of his iniquities. But this is generally the caſe of thoſe who have embarked in any wicked enterprize, and have ſtifled the voice of conſcience. They are reſolved to ſupport the cauſe they are engaged in at any rate, and at length reſolve upon the moſt horrid crimes. On the other

hand, we ſee the care Providence took of *David*, and how God, by the means of *Huſhai*, defeated this counſel of *Ahithophel*, which, if it had been followed, would certainly have ended in the deſtruction of *David*. The care of Providence appeared likewiſe in the preſervation of *Jonathan* and *Ahimaaz*, who, when they were ſent to inform *David* of what paſſed at *Jeruſalem*, were purſued, but not diſcovered. From all this it plainly appears, that God took *David* into his protection, and ſet bounds to the pride and wickedneſs of *Abſalom*. This hiſtory ſhews likewiſe, that, when God pleaſes, he can turn the hearts of men, and render uſeleſs their wiſeſt counſels, and bring to nought the beſt concerted ſchemes. The tragical end of *Ahithophel*, who hanged himſelf when he ſaw that his advice was not taken, and that *Abſalom* could not ſupport himſelf, is a remarkable example of the divine vengeance upon traitors, and upon thoſe that form criminal and unjuſt enterpriſes.

CHAP. XVIII.

I. *DAVID* ſends his forces to fight with the army of *Abſalom*, and charges them to ſpare *Abſalom* in the engagement. II. *Abſalom*'s army is defeated; and as he fled, he was caught in a tree by his hair, where *Joab* ſlew him; which, when *David* heard, he was extremely afflicted.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE we ſee the event and end of *Abſalom*'s rebellion, and the puniſhment that God inflicted upon that unnatural and impious ſon, who intended to have deprived his father both of his life and kingdom. In this hiſtory we ſee evident marks of God upon *Abſalom*, ſince he periſhe

in a very tragical manner, hanging in a tree by the hair of his head, and being killed in that poſture by *Joab*, notwithſtanding the ſtrict charge his father *David* gave to ſave his life. This is a great example of the divine vengeance, which overtakes the wicked, and eſpecially ambitious men, diſobedient children, and ſuch as rebel againſt their lawful ſovereigns. It is likewiſe obſervable in this hiſtory, that after God had permitted the rebellion of *Abſalom*, to chaſtiſe and humble *David* his father, he delivered him from that imminent danger, and reſtored to him the bleſſing of peace. It muſt be conſidered further, that the divine vengeance overtook not only *Abſalom*, but the *Iſraelites* alſo; for there fell of them twenty thouſand: Thus did God puniſh thoſe who had joined *Abſalom*, and rebelled againſt their king. Laſtly, *David*'s exceſſive grief, when he heard of the death of *Abſalom*, muſt be aſcribed, not only to his tender affection for his unnatural and rebellious ſon, but alſo to his piety. He was more concerned for his ſin, and the ſtate in which he died, than for his death. The affection of a parent is very ſtrong; the ſins, the ingratitude of children, cannot root it from their heart; and they who fear God are then moſt inconſolable, when their children are engaged in a courſe of ſin, and they ſee them die in a ſtate of condemnation.

CHAP. XIX.

I. *DAVID* being told that his concern for the death of *Abſalom* diſcouraged his ſubjects, ſhews himſelf to them, and is again eſtabliſhed in his kingdom by the men of *Judah*. II. He pardons *Shimei*, who had inſulted him as he fled before *Abſalom*. III. He reſtores to *Mephiboſheth* the eſtate which *Ziba* had obtained from him by ſurpriſe.

IV. He ſends back *Barzillai*, who had aſſiſted him during the war with *Abſalom*, and takes his ſon into his ſervice. V. The men of *Iſrael* complain that they were not conſulted in bringing back *David* to *Jeruſalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter informs us, that God reſtored *David* to his kingdom, after the conſpiracy of *Abſalom* had been defeated. God puts an end to his corrections when men humble themſelves, and grow better by them; and, when they receive them as they ought, grants them a happy iſſue out of their afflictions. Beſides this general obſervation, we may reflect upon four things that are here related. I. The firſt is, That *David*, who had ſo patiently ſuffered the reproaches of *Shimei* when he fled, pardoned his crime when he returned to *Jeruſalem*; though *Abiſhai* adviſed to put him to death, and there was reaſon to believe he humbled himſelf only for fear of puniſhment. This clemency of *David* is a leſſon to every body, and eſpecially to great men, to forgive as much as poſſible even the moſt heinous injuries, and not to give ear to thoſe who inſpire them with revenge. II. *David* did an act of juſtice in reſtoring to *Mephiboſheth* his goods, which *Ziba* had obtained by ſurpriſe and calumny. A conſcientious man reſtores, or cauſes reſtitution to be made, when he is able, to every one, of what belongs to him; he remedies as much as poſſible the injury he has done, though he did it imprudently; concluding, that treaties or contracts made by ſurpriſe and ill methods, and which are contrary to juſtice, ought not to ſubſiſt. It is true, *David* divided the eſtate between *Mephiboſheth* and *Ziba*, whereas the former ſeems to be entitled to the whole. But it may be *David* only gave this order conditionally, till he had time

time to make more ſtrict enquiry into the diſpute, and that, when he was better informed, he reſtored the whole to *Mephibosheth*, or made it up to him ſome other way: the equity of this prince obliges us to ſuppoſe ſomething of this ſort: or perhaps the king only ordered that *Ziba*, who had the management of *Mephibosheth*'s eſtate, ſhould have for his ſalary half the revenue. III. *David*'s gratitude to *Barzillai*, who had aſſiſted him during his flight, teaches us never to be ungrateful to thoſe who have done us any good: and the refuſal of *Barzillai* to go with the king to *Jeruſalem*, at his great age, ſhews us, that perſons advanced in years, and generally all thoſe who ſeek for a quiet and retired life, ſhould ſequeſter themſelves from the hurry and noiſe of the world; and that a private life is attended with much more ſweetneſs and innocence, than that which is ſpent in pomp and pleaſures. Laſtly, It is to be obſerved, upon *David*'s being at firſt reſtored only by the men of *Judah*, and upon complaints made by the people of *Iſrael*, that they were not called to bring back *David* to *Jeruſalem*; that there were already, even at that time, ſeeds of diviſion between the men of *Iſrael* and the men of *Judah*; which afterwards gave occaſion to the ſedition raiſed by *Sheba*, and, ſeveral years after, to the revolt of the ten tribes of *Iſrael* under the reign of *Rehoboam*.

CHAP. XX.

I. SHEBA having made the tribes of *Iſrael* to rebel, *David* orders *Amaſa* to aſſemble his army; but *Amaſa* delaying too long, *David* ſent *Abiſhai* againſt *Sheba*; and *Joab*, taking umbrage at the confidence *David* put in *Amaſa*, in giving him the command of the army, kills him treacherouſly. II. Afterwards *Joab* beſieges the town of *Abel* where *Sheba*

was retired; and the inhabitants of that town, by the advice of a woman, cut off *Sheba*'s head, and ſo put an end to the war.

REFLECTIONS.

THE obſervations we are to make upon *Sheba*'s revolt are, that factious and ſeditious ſpirits are very dangerous, and may occaſion a great deal of trouble in a ſtate; and that ſuch people are never to be liſtened to nor encouraged. In *Joab*'s killing *Amaſa*, we muſt obſerve, on one hand, the wickedneſs of *Joab*, who, after he had ſlain *Abner* and *Abſalom*, killed *Amaſa*, in a baſe, treacherous, and deteſtable manner; and on the other, we obſerve the juſt judgment of God upon *Amaſa*, who had rebelled againſt his king, and joined *Abſalom*'s party. And ſince it was envy and jealouſy which hurried *Joab* to the murder of *Amaſa*, we learn from hence how dangerous it is to hearken to the ſuggeſtions of this paſſion, which often produces very fatal conſequences. It is added, that the ſedition of *Sheba* was put a ſtop to by the wiſe counſel of a certain woman, who adviſed to put him to death; which ſhews, that prudent and good counſels are to be followed, let them come from what part they will; and that rebels commonly make a fatal end. Moreover, this rebellion of *Sheba* was a new chaſtiſement of God upon *David*; and here we are moſt ſeriouſly to conſider, how many calamities this prince was expoſed to; and how the judgments of God purſued him, after he had defiled himſelf by adultery, and by the murder of *Uriah*. After he fell into theſe ſins, he ſaw the death of his child; the diſhonour and misfortunes of his family; his daughter *Tamar* raviſhed by her own brother *Amnon*; *Amnon* ſlain by his brother *Abſalom*; *Abſalom* rebelling againſt him, with almoſt all his ſubjects; his wives violated in the ſight of all *Iſrael*: he was

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turned out of *Jeruſalem* by his ſon, and obliged to fly; and afterwards had the affliction to ſee him periſh, and had like at laſt to have loſt his kingdom by the revolt of *Sheba*. By all which we are taught, that God abhors adultery and murder; and that they who are guilty of theſe crimes, uſually receive their puniſhment in the ſame way in which they had offended, that is, by impurity, and by the effuſion of blood. Nevertheleſs, we muſt remember that God ſent all theſe evils upon *David* to humble him, and to make him ſenſible of his ſin; that with the ſame deſign he chaſtiſes ſinners; and when they improve by his corrections, he pardons them, as he pardoned *David*.

CHAP. XXI.

I. GOD ſends a famine upon the kingdom of *Iſrael*, becauſe *Saul* had put to death the *Gibeonites*, contrary to the treaty made with them formerly by *Joſhua*; which famine could not be removed till ſeven of *Saul*'s ſons were put to death. It is not eaſy to determine exactly what time this happened: but the twelfth verſe gives us room to believe it was not very long after *Saul*'s death. II. There is likewiſe an account in this chapter of four wars that *David* had with the *Philiſtines*, and of four giants that were ſlain.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory ought to be well conſidered. God ſent a famine upon *David*'s kingdom, becauſe *Saul*, out of a falſe zeal, had put to death ſeveral of the *Gibeonites*, contrary to the treaty made between their anceſtors and *Joſhua*, about four hundred years before; and nothing leſs than the death of *Saul*'s ſons could remove this ſore viſitation.

tation. This ſhews clearly, that treaties which have been made and confirmed by an oath, even ſuch as have been long made, and were obtained by ſurpriſe, ought to be obſerved; that they ought never to be broke on pretence of religion, or any other conſideration whatever; that the violation of oaths and promiſes brings the ſevereſt judgments of God, not only upon princes and governors who are guilty of that crime, but alſo upon their families, and even ſometimes upon their people. We may likewiſe obſerve in this hiſtory the curſe of God upon the poſterity of *Saul*; and from thence learn, that wicked men expoſe themſelves and their children to all kinds of miſeries. It is proper to make two obſervations more: I. That the ſons of *Saul* were juſtly delivered by *David* to be put to death, ſince he gave them not up to the *Gibeonites* till after he had conſulted the Lord, as we read in the beginning of this chapter; and as their death put an end to the famine, God ſignified by the event his approbation of their being put to death. Therefore *David*, in this action, did not tranſgreſs the law, which forbids the children to be puniſhed for their fathers ſins. II. The next thing to be conſidered is, that if God ſuffered the ſons of *Saul* to be put to death, it was only a temporal puniſhment. What we read at the end of the chapter, of ſeveral giants ſlain in the wars of *David* with the *Philiſtines*, proves, that God gave him great ſucceſs, and though he had to deal with very formidable enemies, he always protected him, and by his means completed the deſtruction of the enemies of his people.

CHAP. XXII.

DAVID being delivered from his enemies, and in the peaceable poſſeſſion of his kingdom, praiſes God by a ſong; in which he deſcribes the great dangers

gers he had been expoſed to, and celebrates the power, the goodneſs, and the juſtice of God, in delivering him from them.

Reflections.

ON this ſong we are to conſider, I. That though *David* was a favourite of heaven, and a king beloved of God, he had been expoſed to dangers in which his ruin ſeemed inevitable. The ſame may happen to others whom God loves: who are nevertheleſs the objects of his love, and ought never to deſpair of his aſſiſtance. II. The exalted deſcription *David* gives in this ſong of the power God had diſplayed in his behalf, and the facility with which he had confounded his enemies, furniſhes us with powerful motives to confidence in the Almighty, ſince nothing can hurt thoſe whom he takes into his care and protection. III. We muſt take particular notice of what *David* ſays, that *God had rewarded him according to his righteouſneſs; that he had kept the ways of the Lord, and had not wickedly departed from his God*; which we muſt not underſtand, as if *David* thought himſelf innocent before God; but his meaning is, that God had ſupported the righteouſneſs of his cauſe, and his innocence againſt *Saul* and all his enemies, who unjuſtly perſecuted him; it means likewiſe, that he had not forſaken the worſhip of the true God, nor ever fallen into idolatry; otherwiſe, he had been guilty of great ſins, but the Lord had had reſpect to his repentance. Men have no merit before God; yet God, who is juſt and holy, has reſpect, according to his promiſe, to the juſtice and integrity of thoſe that ſerve him. This is expreſſed in theſe words: *With the upright man, thou wilt ſhew thyſelf upright; and with the pure, thou wilt ſhew thyſelf pure; but thou rendereſt to the wicked according to their wickedneſs.* God protects good men,

men, and hears their prayers in the time of their trouble; whereas he rejects the cry of the wicked; as *David* ſignifies, when he ſays, that *when they are in diſtreſs, there is none to deliver them; and when they cry to the Lord, he will not hear them.* Laſtly, *David*'s hearty thanks and praiſe to God in this ſong, ſhould teach us to preſerve the remembrance of the dangers we have been expoſed to, and from which God has been graciouſly pleaſed to deliver us; that ſo we may be engaged to teſtify our gratitude, and praiſe him continually.

CHAP. XXIII.

THERE are two things related in this chapter, I. The laſt words of *David*. II. The names of the chief and moſt valiant officers of that prince; and ſome of their moſt remarkable actions.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are chiefly to take notice of in this chapter are, the laſt words of *David*, the meaning of which is as follows: In them he gives a deſcription of a good prince; comparing him to the ſun, which by its rays warms the earth after it has been refreſhed with ſhowers, and makes it fruitful. This he declares would be the caſe of his family, out of which he was perſuaded God would raiſe up, after his death, good governors to rule his people *Iſrael*, and would enrich them with his bleſſings, while his judgments would be poured out upon the wicked, compared to thorns which are cut down and burnt. We here learn, that princes ſhould be men that fear God, juſt and beneficent; making it their chief ſtudy to promote the happineſs of their ſubjects. *David*'s ſentiments upon this ſubject are ſtill better ſuited to Chriſtian kings and princes.

princes. From theſe words we likewiſe learn, that juſt and religious princes are a ſource of bleſſings to their people, which they cannot eſteem too highly; and therefore that they ought with great earneſtneſs to beg of God to give them ſuch to reign over them. Laſtly, We are to conclude from the laſt words of *David*, that the divine favour extends to thoſe that fear him, and to their poſterity; but that the wicked are the objects of his wrath. From the number of the valiant men that were in *David*'s ſervice, and the relation of their moſt remarkable actions, we learn, that when God is pleaſed to exalt a prince, and to protect a people, he raiſes up perſons proper to execute great deſigns; and that, in general, when he propoſes any end to himſelf, he never fails to provide the means neceſſary to arrive at it. The action of the three valiant men who went and drew water at *Bethlehem*, was a proof of their courage and love for their king. However, *David* would not drink it, becauſe they had got it at the hazard of their lives. By this refuſal he ſhewed that he did not approve of their expoſing themſelves without neceſſity: but he made a religious uſe of the water, pouring it out in honour of the Deity; which was a greater glory to thoſe who fetched it, than if he had drank it. This is an inſtance of *David*'s prudence, and of the account he made of the valour of theſe three men; it teaches us likewiſe, that we ought not, for our private intereſt or ſatisfaction, to expoſe others to danger, nor even ſuffer them to expoſe themſelves, without neceſſity.

CHAP. XXIV.

I. DAVID having ſinned in numbering the people, God ſent the prophet *Gad* to him, to give him his choice of three puniſhments, the famine,

famine, ſword, or peſtilence. II. The king chooſing the latter, ſeventy thouſand of his ſubjects periſhed. III. The divine wrath was averted by *David*'s profound humiliation, and by the ſacrifice he offered, by God's command, in the place appointed by the prophet.

REFLECTIONS.

DAVID's ſin, puniſhment, repentance, and pardon, are the four things which we are to conſider in this chapter. I. He ſinned in making the people be numbered, becauſe he did it without neceſſity, contrary to the command of God, and from a principle of pride; and his guilt was the greater, as he had been by *Joab*, and by his other officers, warned of the ſin and danger of what he was going to do. Beſides, *David*, after his former ſins, and the puniſhments he had endured, ought to have been more humble. We here ſee, that it is a hard taſk to preſerve our humility in a proſperous and exalted ſtation; and that we may ſin, not only by doing things in themſelves ſinful, but even in things in themſelves innocent, when they are done in a manner that God approves not of, or upon a bad principle. II. On the puniſhment which God inflicted upon *David* we muſt obſerve, that by deſtroying ſo great a number of his ſubjects, and in ſo ſhort a time, God puniſhed him for glorying in their multitude; and that by ordering him to chooſe one of the three ſcourges propoſed by the prophet, he was pleaſed to try him, and ſee whether he would intirely reſign himſelf into the hands of the Lord, or truſt in human means; but above all, to make him, by this means, the more ſenſible that he had provoked the Lord to anger. However, he gave him at the ſame time a proof of his goodneſs; and *David* expreſſed his humility, his confidence in God, and his reſignation to the divine will, by chooſing the peſtilence, which

proceeds

proceeds in a more particular manner from God, and which might have fallen upon himſelf as well as his ſubjects; whereas he might have ſecured himſelf from the dangers of war and famine. Thus does God employ the fitteſt means to bring men to repentance, and gives proofs of his love, while his hand is ſtretched out to chaſtiſe them: and thus ought we, when God afflicts us, to reſign ourſelves intirely to his will, and ſubmit to all his diſpenſations. III. *David*'s hearty ſorrow for his ſin, ſhews, that if he had forgot himſelf ſo as to give way to proud and arrogant thoughts, he humbled himſelf in a very inſtructive manner, falling down, and ſaying before all the people: *Lo, I have ſinned and done wickedly; but theſe ſheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be againſt me and againſt my father's houſe.* Theſe words denote *David*'s profound humility, his lively ſenſe of the heinouſneſs of his ſin, and his tender affection for his ſubjects; and ſhew, that thoſe who are ſincerely ſorry for their faults, are not aſhamed to confeſs them publickly; eſpecially when by their faults they have expoſed others to miſery. We have likewiſe herein an excellent and extraordinary example of the affectionate regard which kings ought to have for their ſubjects. Laſtly, The pardon granted to *David*, in conſequence of his repentance and ſacrifice, ſhews, that the Lord's anger is turned away, and he ſhews mercy to ſinners, when they are ſincerely humbled, and have recourſe to his bounty and mercy.

The end of the Second Book of SAMUEL.

THE

THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS.

ARGUMENT.

The First Book of Kings *contains the history of the reign of* Solomon, *the son of* David, *and of the kings of* Judah *and* Israel, *to the end of the reign of* Jehoshaphat, *king of* Judah, *and* Ahab, *the king of the ten tribes; which includes the history of one hundred and seventeen years.*

CHAP. I.

I. *DAVID* being old, marries *Abishag*. II. *Adonijah* his son sets up for king, but *David* being informed of it by *Bathsheba*, and by the prophet *Nathan*, causes *Solomon* to be anointed, and to be proclaimed king, so that *Adonijah*'s faction was presently dispersed. III. *Solomon* pardons *Adonijah*, upon condition that he would continue in his duty for the time to come.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THIS attempt of *Adonijah*, was another trial for *David*. However, Providence suffered

this to happen whilſt *David* was yet alive, that *Adonijah*'s party might be ruined and diſperſed, and *Solomon* eſtabliſhed in the kingdom; that ſo the promiſes made in favour of *Solomon* might be accompliſhed; and that the pride and ambition, and conſpiracy of *Adonijah*, might only haſten the exaltation of *Solomon*, and ſtrengthen him in the kingdom. This is one of thoſe examples which prove that God bringeth down the high looks of the proud, and generally confounds them in their own haughtineſs; and that nothing can hinder the execution of the deſigns of providence; that whatever men do to prevent them, only ſerves to haſten them; and that criminal attempts turn to the confuſion of the authors. *Solomon*'s clemency in pardoning *Adonijah*, muſt be aſcribed to his kindneſs, and to the love *David* had for *Adonijah*, notwithſtanding his ſin. This ſhould teach great men to behave with clemency, and to pardon offences committed againſt them, as much as poſſible, and as the public peace will admit of it; and we ought in general to be inclined to meekneſs, and to forgive with pleaſure thoſe that have offended us.

CHAP. II.

I. KING *David* being near his end, exhorts *Solomon* to fear God; orders him to put *Joab* to death for the murders and other crimes he had been guilty of; to take care of *Barzillai*'s family, who had aſſiſted him when *Abſalom* conſpired againſt him; and to puniſh *Shimei*. II. *David* dies, and after his death *Solomon* reigned in his ſtead, and put to death his brother *Adonijah*: he baniſhed *Abiathar* the prieſt; and likewiſe put to death *Joab* and *Shimei*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE exhortations of *David* to his ſon *Solomon* before he died, to fear God, are a mark of his piety, and of his affection for his ſon. In imitation of this example, parents ought, above all things, to recommend to their children the fear of the Lord, while they are with them, and before they leave this world; which is the true way to ſecure the bleſſing of God to their families. The orders *David* gave *Solomon* concerning *Joab* and *Shimei*, it muſt be obſerved, do not argue *David* to be bloody-minded and revengeful: he gave him theſe orders, becauſe it was his duty to inſtruct his ſon, and provide for the ſecurity of his kingdom. But he recommended to him the family of *Barzillai* from a principle of gratitude, which we ought always to cheriſh in our breaſt for thoſe who have done us good, and for their poſterity. *Solomon* began his reign with the puniſhment of *Adonijah*, *Joab*, *Abiathar* and *Shimei*. His brother *Adonijah*, whom he had pardoned before, he juſtly put to death, becauſe he perſiſted in his deſign of being made king; he had a party for him, *Abiathar* the high prieſt, and *Joab* the general of the army, being in his intereſt; and his aim was to ſtrengthen his party by marrying *Abiſhag*, who had been the wife of his father *David*; which beſides was in itſelf a criminal attempt. *Solomon* did not put *Abiathar* the prieſt to death, but only baniſhed him, in reſpect to his character, and becauſe he had been a friend to his father *David*. This was in *Solomon* an act of juſtice and prudence; but in the views of providence it was deſigned to accompliſh thoſe threatnings that God had formerly denounced againſt the family of *Eli*, from which *Abiathar* deſcended. As to *Joab*, whoſe life *Solomon* took away, he deſerved to die for his wickedneſs in killing *Abner*, *Abſalom*, and *Amaſa*, and for

for rebelling againſt *David*, as he had then done, by entring into the conſpiracy of *Adonijah*. As for *Shimei*, *Solomon* at firſt gave him his life, on condition he would not depart from *Jeruſalem*; prudence requiring him to uſe this precaution with a man he had ſo much reaſon to ſuſpect; but when *Shimei* broke the oath which he had taken, and left *Jeruſalem*, perhaps with ſome ill deſign, he was juſtly condemned to die. Princes are ſometimes obliged, contrary to their own inclination, to uſe ſeverity, and take away the lives of ſuch as diſturb the public tranquility; and bloody, unjuſt, and ſeditious men, ſuch as *Adonijah*, *Abiathar*, *Joab*, and *Shimei*, receive at length the reward of their deeds.

CHAP. III.

I. KING *Solomon* marries the daughter of *Pharaoh* king of *Egypt*. II. He goes to *Gibeon*, where the tabernacle was, to offer a ſolemn ſacrifice; God appears to him in that place, and permits him to aſk of him what he pleaſed. *Solomon* having deſired wiſdom, rather than riches, God grants him both, and that prince ſoon gave proofs of the extraordinary wiſdom he had received from heaven, in the judgment he pronounced in the diſpute between the two women about their children.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD granted *Solomon* a peculiar favour, when he gave him the liberty to aſk what he pleaſed; and *Solomon* gave an inſtance of his wiſdom and piety, when he aſked of God ſkill and underſtanding to enable him to govern the people, rather than glory and riches. This requeſt was ſo agreeable to God, that he granted this prince an extraordinary degree of wiſdom, and at the ſame time gave him riches and

glory ſurpaſſing the greateſt kings. This teaches princes and magiſtrates, that being ſet up for the good of the people, they ought above all things to endeavour to get that wiſdom and integrity which they have ſo much need of, and to found their glory, not in power and riches, but in the exerciſe of juſtice, and in good government. And we ought all of us to learn from hence, to labour after, and beg of God in the firſt place true wiſdom, which conſiſts in fearing him; and the gifts and graces of the ſpirit neceſſary to that end. The manner in which God received *Solomon*'s prayer, proves, that he is always ready to grant theſe gifts to thoſe that aſk them, beſides which, he often grants them temporal bleſſings, although they do not aſk them. This is what *Jeſus Chriſt* teaches us in theſe words: *Seek ye firſt the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs, and all other things ſhall be added unto you.* Laſtly, They ſoon diſcovered that *Solomon* was endued with an extraordinary degree of wiſdom, by the judgment he paſſed between the two women that came before him; and theſe beginnings of his reign ſhew how completely happy that prince would have been, if he had perſevered in holineſs, and in the fear of the Lord.

CHAP. IV.

IN this chapter we ſee, I. Who were the principal officers of king *Solomon*. II. The extent of his kingdom; his riches; the plenty and peace enjoyed by his ſubjects; his wiſdom; his knowledge of natural things; and the great reputation he had in foreign countries.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee here, that God raiſed *Solomon* to a very great pitch of glory, granting him riches and power, which diſtinguiſhed him from the greateſt princes,

princes, and withal, ſuch wiſdom, and prudence, and knowledge, which made him vaſtly ſuperior to the wiſeſt men that were then in the world. Thus God fulfilled the promiſes he had made to *David*, to give him a ſon whoſe kingdom ſhould be very glorious; and thus he rewarded the piety of *Solomon*, and the zeal he then ſhewed for his ſervice. We may moreover conſider, that God granted this power and plenty to *Solomon*, to enable him to build the temple of *Jeruſalem*, and to eſtabliſh divine ſervice in it. However, it muſt be remembred, that this great wiſdom, and the riches, and the graces *Solomon* had received, were profitable to him only whilſt he uſed them as he ought; but as ſoon as he abuſed them, they became a ſnare and ruin to him. This ſhews, how dangerous the poſſeſſion of riches is, and how much we ought to fear abuſing God's gifts and graces.

CHAP. V.

HIRAM king of *Tyre* and *Solomon* ſend ambaſſadors to each other. *Solomon* employs a great number of workmen to build the temple, and obtains of *Hiram* workmen and materials for the ſame purpoſe.

REFLECTIONS.

IT appears here, that as ſoon as *Solomon* was upon the throne, he ſet about building the temple, according to the direction and ſcheme that his father *David* had communicated to him before his death; and that God, to facilitate the execution of this pious deſign, diſpoſed the king of *Tyre* to grant him all he deſired. Nothing is more commendable in a prince, who knows God, than to have at heart the concerns

of religion, and God bleſſes thoſe deſigns which are formed to promote his glory, and gives them ſucceſs.

CHAP. VI.

SOLOMON begins to build the temple in the fourth year of his reign, and the building was finiſhed at the end of ſeven years.

CHAP. VII.

SOLOMON builds the houſe in the foreſt of *Libanus*; his own and the queen's palace; and orders ſeveral things to be made for the temple, and for divine ſervice.

REFLECTIONS *on chap.* vi, *and* vii.

AS ſoon as *Solomon* was ſettled upon the throne, he began to build the temple at *Jeruſalem*, agreeable to his father *David*'s order, and the will of God himſelf. He built it in a moſt magnificent manner, employing to that end thoſe immenſe riches God had given him; and ſpared nothing which might engage his ſubjects, and all the neighbouring nations, to reverence and reſpect the temple. Theſe were marks of the zeal which then animated and inſpired him. God let him know that what he had done was acceptable in his ſight; and that if he and his people inviolably adhered to him, he would always be their protector and their God. But this prince and his ſubjects falling into diſobedience and idolatry, that holy place was delivered to the mercy of idolatrous nations, and was at laſt utterly deſtroyed. Laſtly, The temple of *Solomon*, as to the chief parts of it, the court, the holy and the moſt holy place, and what was ſet in them, was the ſame with the tabernacle, which *Moſes* had built in the wilderneſs, as we ſee by the fortieth chapter of *Exodus*.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

I. THE ark of the covenant, and the ſacred veſſels, which had been till then in the tabernacle, which *David* had ſet up at *Jeruſalem*, king *Solomon* orders to be carried into the temple. He offers ſacrifices, and God gives them tokens of his preſence. II. He dedicates the temple by a prayer, in which he bleſſes God that he had happily executed his deſign of building him an houſe, and beſeeches him to accept the prayers which ſhould be offered up to him in that place. III. Laſtly, After his prayer is ended, he offers a ſolemn ſacrifice, and again praiſes God; and then diſmiſſes the people.

REFLECTIONS.

SOLOMON's dedication of the temple, and the prayer he addreſſed to God, is a noble proof of that prince's fervent zeal at that time. In this prayer we ſee, his ſentiments of religion were perfectly pure; that he conſidered the temple as a place where God would be preſent, but not confined; and which would be ſet apart chiefly for prayer, and not for a worſhip purely external and bodily. This teaches us, that God dwells not in temples made with hands; that he fills heaven and earth; and therefore, that he ought to be every where worſhipped in ſpirit and in truth. Nevertheleſs, when there are places ſet apart for his ſervice, they ought to be had in reverence; and we ſhould conſider them chiefly as houſes of prayer, as the temple at *Jeruſalem* was, as our Lord teaches us in the goſpel. Let us next conſider the ſeveral parts of this prayer of *Solomon*. He begged of God to hear all the ſupplications offered up to him in the temple by the *Jews*, in their ſeveral neceſſities, and even by ſtrangers. From this prayer we learn, that all

events proceed from God; that war, famine, peſtilence, and other judgments, are inflicted by providence, when men provoke God by their ſins; that to have recourſe to God by prayer, confeſſion of ſins, and true repentance, is the way to remedy theſe evils; and that God is always ready to hear and to deliver thoſe who call upon him in their neceſſities, and with all their hearts turn unto him. We here ſee, laſtly, with what fervency and joy *Solomon* gave thanks to God, and implored his bleſſing in behalf of all the people. Let us join with him in both theſe duties; praiſing God for all his bleſſings, and eſpecially for ſpiritual mercies; above all, with fervent devotion beſeeching him to turn our hearts towards him, that we may keep his commandments faithfully and with perſeverance.

CHAP. IX.

I. GOD again appears to *Solomon*, and promiſes to dwell in the temple, and to eſtabliſh his kingdom, if he and his people obeyed his laws; threatning, on the contrary, to deſtroy the *Iſraelites* and the temple, if they forſook his ſervice. II. *Solomon* gives to the king of *Tyre* ſeveral cities, in return for gold and materials which that prince had furniſhed him with; he builds cities and forts, and makes ſeveral nations tributary; gives poſts and offices to the *Iſraelites* his ſubjects; brings the queen his conſort to the palace he had built for her; and offers ſacrifices to God, and ſends a fleet to *Ophir*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS ſecond viſion, in which God renewed with *Solomon* his promiſes of favour, provided he and his people were obedient, and threatened him with the effects of his wrath if they forſook him,

him, ſhews, that God neglects nothing which may tend to unite men to him, and confirm them in goodneſs. He is always ready to pour his benefits upon them, while they fear him; but deprives them of his bleſſings, when they dare to offend him, and withdraw their allegiance from him. Thus it was with the *Jews*, who, when they had provoked the Lord by their ſins, experienced the truth of the threatnings contained in this chapter. II. *Solomon* took care to provide for the ſecurity of his kingdom, and the happineſs of his ſubjects, which is not only lawful, but the indiſpenſable duty of a good prince. He expreſſed likewiſe a great zeal for religion and the worſhip of God; which is ſtill more worthy of a prince's care, whom God has honoured with the knowledge of himſelf. Laſtly, We ſee in this chapter, that God bleſſed *Solomon* in all his undertakings, confirmed and enlarged his dominion, ſubduing to him the neighbouring nations, and increaſing his riches and revenues. Behold how God proſpered this prince while he adhered to his duty! and thus is he always ready and willing to bleſs good kings, and in general all thoſe that fear him and ſerve him in truth and ſincerity.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter contains two things, I. The arrival of the queen of *Sheba*, who came to *Jeruſalem* to ſee and hear king *Solomon*. II. A deſcription of the riches of *Solomon*; of his throne; of his veſſels; of his chariots; of the tribute that was paid him; and of the plenty enjoyed by his ſubjects.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things chiefly to be conſidered on the journey taken by the queen of *Sheba*, who came to *Jeruſalem*, becauſe ſhe had heard of the wiſdom

wiſdom and ſplendor of *Solomon:* One is, that this journey ſerved not only to heighten the glory and reputation of that prince; but alſo to inſpire the queen of *Sheba* and her attendants with great reverence for the true God, who was worſhipped at *Jeruſalem.* It appears, by what that princeſs ſaid to king *Solomon,* that ſhe returned to her own country full of ſuch thoughts, ſince ſhe acknowledged God had given *Solomon* all his wiſdom and all his glory, and made him king over *Iſrael.* The other reflection is that which our Lord makes in the goſpel, when he ſays that the queen of *Sheba,* who came from a far country to hear the wiſdom of *Solomon,* ſhall riſe up in judgment againſt us and condemn us, if we do not grow better by the divine inſtructions of him that is greater than *Solomon*; and who in wiſdom, as well as glory, infinitely ſurpaſſes this king of the *Jews.* As for the magnificence and riches of that great king, which was deſcribed in this chapter, it muſt be conſidered, I. That God granted him thoſe advantages, to accompliſh the promiſes he made of giving him ſuch wiſdom, riches, and glory, as ſhould raiſe him above all other kings. II. We ſhould take notice of the judgment which *Solomon* himſelf paſſes upon his glory, in the book of *Eccleſiaſtes: I was,* ſays he, *king over Iſrael in Jeruſalem; I was great above all that had been before me; I made me great works; I built me houſes; I gathered me alſo ſilver, and gold, and precious things; and whatſoever mine eyes deſired I kept not from them; and withheld not my heart from any joy. But when I had looked upon all the labour which I had taken, I found that all was vanity and vexation of ſpirit.* Add to this, that the enjoyment of all theſe advantages is not only vain, but dangerous. Men are eaſily corrupted in the midſt of peace and plenty, as *Solomon* himſelf was at laſt,

as

as we find in the next chapter. We ought therefore in this reſpect to ſet bounds to our deſires, and depend upon providence for the reſt, which will always provide us with the neceſſaries of life, as it clothes the flowers of the field more magnificently than *Solomon* was in all his glory, as *Jeſus Chriſt* tells us in the goſpel.

CHAP. XI.

I. KING *Solomon* forſakes God in his old age, and is drawn away into idolatry by his wives, and occaſions the people to fall into the ſame ſin. II. At which God being provoked, declared that he would take away from his ſon a part of his kingdom, and even at that time did ſtir up againſt him *Hadad*, *Rezon*, and *Jeroboam*. III. To the laſt of theſe a prophet foretold, that he ſhould reign over ten tribes of *Iſrael*; upon which *Jeroboam* retired into *Egypt*, where he ſtayed till the death of *Solomon*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections to be here made relate to *Solomon*'s ſin, and to his puniſhment. I. In his ſin we are to conſider, that this prince, who had been enriched with ſo many graces; who had been ſo wiſe in his youth, and who had dedicated the temple of *Jeruſalem* with ſo great zeal and devotion, forſook God in his old age, and fell into idolatry; he built temples to the idols which his wives adored; in theſe temples he worſhipped falſe gods himſelf, and drew his ſubjects into the ſame ſin. If the wiſeſt of men ſo greatly erred, who dare be off their guard? Even thoſe who have received the greateſt favours from God, ought to improve by this example, and confeſs, that notwithſtanding all theſe advantages, they may fall into the greateſt diſorders, and become wholly corrupt:

rupt: Thoſe eſpecially, who in their youth have had, through the grace of God, ſentiments of piety and virtue, ought to preſerve them with great care, leſt they loſe them, and God intirely forſake them. It muſt likewiſe be obſerved, that *Solomon* corrupted himſelf amidſt the pleaſures and the glory that ſurrounded him. But the chief cauſe of his corruption, was his marrying ſeveral wives, and they too ſtrangers and idolators; which God had expreſly forbidden the kings of *Iſrael* to do. Theſe women ſeduced him, and tempted him to idolatry. This is an example, which proves that men are eaſily ſeduced by plenty and pleaſures; that voluptuouſneſs is the moſt dangerous of all temptations; and that women, loſt to all ſenſe of virtue and true religion, may engage thoſe who are devoted to them in all manner of irregularity and impiety. II. We ſee, in the ſecond place, that the Lord, provoked at *Solomon*'s thus forſaking him, and drawing his people into idolatry, in his own time ſtirred up ſeveral enemies againſt him, and took from his ſon a great part of his kingdom, to give it to *Jeroboam*. Puniſhment follows cloſe upon the ſins we commit againſt God; but he is above all offended with thoſe who ungratefully turn away from him. He deprives them of his grace and favour, takes from them the advantages they did enjoy, and makes them examples of his vengeance. But *Solomon* not only introduced idolatry, he even ſuffered it to continue all his life, ſo that it remained in the reign of his ſon *Rehoboam*, as we find in the ſequel of this hiſtory. *Solomon* therefore did not retrieve his great ſin. We likewiſe learn from this hiſtory, and from what the prophet *Ahijah* ſaid to *Jeroboam*, that it is God who exalteth and abaſeth kings, and diſpoſes of kingdoms, and giveth them to whom he pleaſes.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

HERE we ſee three things: I. How, and upon what occaſion, ten tribes of *Iſrael* revolted from *Rehoboam* the ſon of *Solomon*, and took *Jeroboam* for their king. II. That *Rehoboam*, intending to make war againſt the ten revolted tribes, was forbidden by God to execute that deſign. III. That *Jeroboam*, fearing leſt his ſubjects ſhould return to their obedience to *Rehoboam*, when they went up to *Jeruſalem* to the ſolemn feſtivals, ſet up a falſe worſhip in his kingdom, making golden calves, which he placed in *Dan* and *Bethel*, and cauſed to be worſhipped under the name of the God of *Iſrael*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we have an account of a remarkable event; the diviſion of the kingdom of *Rehoboam*, the ſon of *Solomon*, into two kingdoms; one of which was that of *Judah*, which remained ſubject to *Rehoboam*; and the other that of the ten tribes that revolted, of which *Jeroboam* was king. Thus God puniſhed the poſterity of *Solomon* as the prophet *Ahijah* had declared, after he had forſaken the worſhip of God to ſerve idols. And as *Rehoboam* loſt part of his kingdom becauſe he would follow the raſh violent counſels of the young people, rather than the prudent advice of the old men; one may learn, that princes ſhould never uſe their people with too great rigour, and that it is dangerous to liſten to the violent counſels of perſons that have neither prudence nor experience, which is commonly the caſe of young folks, though they flatter our paſſions. God's forbidding *Rehoboam*, and his ſubjects, by the prophet *Shemaiah*, to make war againſt their brethren of the ten tribes, ſhews, that God was pleaſed the kingdom

kingdom of *Iſrael* ſhould remain ſeparated from *Judah*. Beſides, God ſuffered them not at that time to make war upon *Jeroboam*, becauſe that prince had not yet offended him by idolatry, and becauſe his ſubjects and the men of *Judah* were brethren. This ſhews, that we ought not haſtily to take up arms againſt thoſe with whom we are united, eſpecially by the bands of religion. Laſtly, As *Reboboam* and his ſubjects deſiſted from their enterprize, as ſoon as the prophet had made known to them what the will of the Lord was; we ought likewiſe to ſubmit to whatever God commands, and never reſiſt his providence, when we ſee he is determined to correct us. Here however, we muſt take notice of the blindneſs and ingratitude of *Jeroboam*, who, inſtead of relying on the promiſes God had made him of preſerving the kingdom in his family, if he continued faithful, and fearing leſt his ſubjects ſhould forſake him, if they went to ſacrifice at *Jeruſalem*, out of a falſe policy ſet up idolatrous worſhip in his kingdom, which occaſioned the ruin of his family, and at laſt, the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes. Thus men, inſtead of truſting to God in the faithful diſcharge of their duty, for ſecurity have recourſe to ill methods, whereby they draw upon themſelves at length thoſe very misfortunes they mean to avoid. It is alſo worth notice, that though *Jeroboam* and his ſubjects did not intend perhaps to worſhip falſe gods, nor did look upon theſe two golden calves as real deities; but meant only to worſhip the true God under the ſimilitude of theſe calves; yet the ſcriptures aſſures us, they were guilty of real idolatry: from whence it follows, that to make a man an idolator, it is not neceſſary that he intends to worſhip falſe gods; but that a man then becomes guilty of this ſin, when he worſhips God under any ſimilitude whatever, and tranſgreſſes what is in

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ſo expreſs a manner preſcribed in the law of God on this ſubject.

CHAP. XIII.

I. A Prophet comes from *Judah* to *Bethel*, and foretels that the altar that *Jeroboam* had built there, ſhould be deſtroyed by a king named *Joſiah*; which prediction he confirms by two miracles. II. This ſame prophet is killed by a lion, for eating in the houſe of another prophet, contrary to the command of God.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is ſomething remarkable, that as ſoon as *Jeroboam* had ſet up his falſe worſhip, and while he was offering upon the altar of *Bethel*, a prophet came thither from *Judah*, who foretold that that altar ſhould be deſtroyed by a king of the race of *David*, named *Joſiah*. This prediction was immediately confirmed by two miracles; the altar was rent, and the hand of the king, which he ſtretched out to lay hold of the prophet, withered and became immoveable, but was reſtored to him afterwards upon the prayer of the prophet. Theſe things happened to convince the ten tribes, that the worſhip which *Jeroboam* had eſtabliſhed at *Bethel* was odious in the ſight of God; and that, although he had permitted them to revolt from *Rehoboam*, *David*'s grandſon, yet the poſterity of *David* ſhould continue for ever. The prediction of the prophet that came from *Judah* is very expreſs: the king, who was to deſtroy the altar of *Bethel*, is particularly named in it; and the prophecy was accompliſhed about three hundred years after, when the good king *Joſiah* overthrew the altar of *Bethel*, as we read in the twenty-third chapter of the Second Book of *Kings*. God's prohibiting the prophet, who went to *Bethel*, to eat in that place, ſhewed, that God looked upon

upon that place as defiled by the idolatry practiſed in it, and the death of the ſame prophet, who was killed by a lion, for eating with the prophet of *Bethel*, tended to the ſame purpoſe; and that it might more plainly appear God had ſent the lion, he ſuffered not the wild beaſt, after he had ſlain the prophet, either to touch his carcaſe, or to hurt the aſs upon which he rode. This ſurpriſing event, which all that paſſed by were witneſſes of, happened, not only to puniſh the prophet for his diſobedience, but alſo and chiefly, that this miracle joined to the foregoing might convince the *Iſraelites* that this prophet was ſent from God, and that all he had foretold would infallibly come to paſs; and this the prophet of *Bethel* acknowledged. Laſtly, What happened to this prophet, who was killed by a lion for diſobeying the expreſs command of God, and ſuffering himſelf to be ſeduced by the prophet of *Bethel*, ſhews, that it can never be lawful to diſobey the commandments of the Lord; and that when he has made known his will to us, we are inexcuſable if we depart from it upon any pretence, and ſuffer ourſelves to be ſeduced by thoſe who attempt to withdraw us from our duty.

CHAP. XIV.

I. *Jeroboam*, king of *Iſrael*, having a ſon ſick, ſends his wife to inquire of the prophet *Ahijah* whether that ſickneſs was mortal. The prophet foretels the death of his ſon, and the deſtruction of his whole family, becauſe of the idolatrous worſhip he had ſet up among the *Iſraelites*. II. *Rehoboam* and his ſubjects fall into idolatry; and God, to puniſh them, cauſes *Shiſhak* king of *Egypt* to come up againſt them, who took the treaſure of the temple of *Jeruſalem*, and carried away great ſpoils. *Rehoboam* dies when he had reigned ſeventeen years, and is ſucceeded by *Abijam* his ſon.

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REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt obſervation we are to make here is, that when *Jeroboam* wanted to conſult the prophet *Ahijah*, to know what would be the event of his ſon's ſickneſs, he ordered his queen not ſay who ſhe was. This he did, becauſe, knowing himſelf to be guilty of idolatry, he durſt not make himſelf known. But God told *Ahijah* that the wife of *Jeroboam* was coming to him, which muſt needs ſurpriſe her very much; andthe prophet, by God's command, declared to her, that not only the young prince ſhould die, but the whole family of *Jeroboam* ſhould be deſtroyed; becauſe by his idolatry he had provoked God, who had ſet him upon the throne. Thus the very ſame prophet, who had formerly foretold that he ſhould reign over the ten tribes, and that if he kept the law of God he would bleſs him, and continue the kingdom to his poſterity, aſſured him of the death of his ſon, and the utter deſtruction of his family. This ſhould have taught *Jeroboam* and his ſubjects, that the worſhip of idols, which they had introduced, muſt be odious in the ſight of the Lord. All theſe threatnings were accompliſhed; the ſon of *Jeroboam* died at the very inſtant *Ahijah* had foretold; and ſome time after all his family were deſtroyed. Thus does God puniſh thoſe who forget his favours and their own duty, who are the authors of impiety, and give offence by their wicked lives. There is one circumſtance very remarkable in this hiſtory. The prophet told the wife of *Jeroboam*, that God would take the ſon that was ſick out of this world, becauſe in him alone, of all the family of *Jeroboam*, he had found ſomething good. When God takes young people, in whom he has implanted ſome good diſpoſitions, it is becauſe he loves them. By this means he ſecures their innocence from the temptations to which they

would be expoſed, and preſerves them from the miſeries in which they would be involved by living longer. On the ſecond part of this chapter, we muſt obſerve, that *Rehoboam*, king of *Judah*, inſtead of improving under God's chaſtening hand, who had ſuffered ten tribes to revolt from him, countenanced and confirmed the idolatry which his father *Solomon* had begun, and with that all manner of uncleanneſs and irregularity. Men too commonly act in this manner; they neither amend by the long ſuffering, nor by the corrections of the Almighty, and ſo expoſe themſelves to new misfortunes, as it happened to *Rehoboam* and his ſubjects. The king of *Egypt* came againſt them and carried off their treaſures, and the moſt valuable things in the temple, and in the king's palace. This ſhould have taught this prince and his ſubjects, that if they continued to provoke God, he would at laſt forſake them, and deliver the city and temple of *Jeruſalem* into the hands of ſtrangers and unbelievers.

CHAP. XV.

I. A *Bijam*, ſon of *Rehoboam* king of *Judah*, reigns three years, and continues in the ſins and idolatry of his father. II. He was ſucceeded by *Aſa* his ſon, who reigned forty years. This prince deſtroyed idolatrous worſhip; he called in the aſſiſtance of *Benhadad*, king of *Syria*, when he was attacked by *Baaſha* king of *Iſrael*: *Jehoſhaphat* his ſon ſucceeded him. III. *Nadab*, the ſecond king of *Iſrael*, ſon of *Jeroboam*, reigns two years. *Baaſha*, conſpiring againſt him, kills him, and reigns in his ſtead.

REFLECTIONS.

IT appears from the hiſtory of *Abijam*, that he did not improve by the misfortunes of his father *Rehoboam*,

hoboam, but imitated his vices; and that nevertheleſs God, in conſideration of the promiſes he had made to *David*, gave him a ſon to ſucceed him, and ſpared *Jeruſalem*. God often grants favours to perſons unworthy of them, and ſometimes ſpares ungodly children for the piety of their fathers. As for *Aſa*, king of *Judah*, he gave proofs of his piety in labouring to aboliſh the idolatry which *Solomon* and *Rehoboam* his predeceſſors had ſet up. Wherein he has ſet an example which ſhould ſtir up princes to remove iniquity, and promote the true ſervice of God in all their ſtates and dominions. But *Aſa* ſinned, when he was attacked by the king of *Iſrael*, and applied to the king of *Syria* for aſſiſtance. We learn in the ſixteenth chapter of the ſecond book of *Chronicles*, that this proceeding diſpleaſed the Lord, and that the end of *Aſa*'s reign did not anſwer to the beginning of it. When men, who have a ſenſe of religion, ſuffer themſelves to be off their guard, they eaſily ſtray from their duty, and rob themſelves of their title to the divine protection. On the reign of *Nadab*, the ſecond king of *Iſrael*, we are to obſerve, that as he followed the impiety and idolatry of his father, he reigned but two years, and periſhed in a miſerable manner, being ſlain by *Baaſha*. This was the juſt judgment of God upon the family of *Jeroboam*, who having ſet up an idolatrous worſhip in the kingdom of the ten tribes, was puniſhed in the perſon of his ſon, as *Solomon*, who had been guilty of a like ſin, was puniſhed in the perſon of his ſon *Rehoboam*; but with this difference, that God preſerved the family of *Solomon* upon the throne, while the family of *Jeroboam* was extinguiſhed; *Baaſha* having deſtroyed the whole houſe of that prince, without leaving one perſon alive, as the prophet *Ahijah* had foretold. This curſe, which ſo viſibly fell upon the family of *Jeroboam*, was to the *Iſraelites* an evident proof, how

much God abhorred the idolatry which *Jeroboam* had introduced, and that the family of David ſhould always ſubſiſt. God takes ſevere vengeance on thoſe who cauſe iniquity to abound; their glory never laſts long, the wrath of God purſues them, and even often falls heavy upon their poſterity.

CHAP. XVI.

1. THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of four kings of *Iſrael*, who all reigned in the time of *Aſa* king of *Judah*, namely, *Baaſha*, *Ela*, *Zimri*, and *Omri*. The prophet *Jehu* declares to *Baaſha*, that God would utterly deſtroy his houſe becauſe of his idolatry. This king died when he had reigned twenty-four years. II. *Elah* his ſon reigned two years, and was the fourth king of *Iſrael*. III. *Zimri*, who was the fifth king, ſlew him, and deſtroyed the whole family of *Baaſha*, but reigned no more than ſeven days; and the people riſing up againſt him, he burnt himſelf in his palace. IV. After his death, *Tibni* and *Omri* diſputed the kingdom, but *Omri* prevailed, and reigned twelve years; he was the ſixth king, and built *Samaria*, which was afterwards the capital of the kingdom of *Iſrael*. All theſe kings were idolators. *Omri* being dead, *Ahab* his ſon ſucceeded, who was more wicked than any of his predeceſſors; he married *Jezebel*, daughter of the king of the *Sidonians*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we obſerve, that *Baaſha*, after he had, by God's command, rooted out all the deſcendants of *Jeroboam*, was himſelf rejected by God becauſe of his idolatry, and his family deſtroyed as *Jeroboam*'s had been, and as the prophet *Jehu* had declared. *Elah* his ſon reigned but two years, and

Zimri

Zimri having conſpired againſt him, ſlew him and all the reſt of *Baaſha*'s family, without leaving one of them alive. Afterwards, *Zimri*, whom God had made uſe of to fulfil the threatnings he had denounced againſt *Baaſha*, came to an end worthy the crime he had committed in murdering his king, and laid violent hands upon himſelf. *Omri*, an idolatrous prince, reigned after him, and next *Ahab*, who exceeded in wickedneſs all thoſe that went before him. We ſee clearly, in the ſeries of all theſe kings of *Iſrael*, that divine vengeance purſues the wicked, and particularly wicked princes. When God has made uſe of them to do juſtice, and to execute the decrees of his providence, he cuts them off, and deſtroys them one by the other. But we muſt take notice, that all theſe kings, notwithſtanding the warnings given them by God, and the examples they had before their eyes, continued to offend him, by keeping up idolatry in their kingdom for reaſons of ſtate aad principles of falſe policy. When men do only conſult their paſſions and their intereſt, and worldly conſiderations prevail with them, nothing can overcome their obſtinacy; the moſt expreſs warnings, and the moſt remarkable inſtances of divine juſtice, are uſeleſs and unprofitable; and therefore the Lord is at length provoked to caſt them off, and forſake them utterly.

CHAP. XVII.

THE hiſtory of the prophet *Elijah*, who lived in the reign of *Ahab*, king of *Iſrael*, begins in this chapter; in which there are four things to be obſerved. I. *Elijah* forewarns *Ahab* of a drought that ſhould laſt three years and a half, which was followed by a great famine. II. God in a miraculous manner feeds *Elijah* near the brook *Cherith*. III. He ſupports him at *Zarephath*, near *Zidon*, at a widow's, whoſe

whoſe meal and oil the prophet multiplied. IV. He raiſes to life the ſon of that widow.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory of *Elijah* is to be read and meditated with great care and attention, ſince he was one of the greateſt prophets that ever was in *Iſrael*; and the moſt remarkable for his zeal, and for the extraordinary and miraculous actions of his life. It muſt be obſerved in general upon this hiſtory, that God, in his great goodneſs, raiſed up *Elijah* among the ten tribes where idolatry abounded, and at the time when *Ahab*, a very wicked king, was going to introduce a ſpecies of idolatry, ſtill more abominable than that introduced by his predeceſſors. The more the *Iſraelites* departed from God, the more powerful means did God make uſe of to recover them. The extraordinary drought and famine which afflicted the kingdom of *Iſrael* at that time, for three years and ſix months, which is taken notice of by the profane writers tended to the ſame end. The Lord intended by this means to puniſh this people, who were engaged in idolatry, and prepare them to receive what *Elijah* ſhould declare in the name of the Lord, to recover them to their duty; and would have this drought denounced againſt king *Ahab* by the prophet *Elijah*, to teach him and all the *Iſraelites* that it came from the Lord, who was the only true God. The miraculous manner in which *Elijah* was fed near the brook *Cherith*, and afterwards in the houſe of a widow whoſe meal and oil were multiplied, is a proof of the care God took of his prophet; and ſhews us, that God takes care of thoſe that fear him in times of danger, and feeds them in the time of dearth, as the ſcripture elſewhere expreſſes it. Our Lord obſerves upon this hiſtory, that *Elijah* was ſent to *Zarephath*, to a woman who was a ſtranger, rather than to the land of *Iſrael*, becauſe

becauſe the *Iſraelites* were not worthy that God ſhould work miracles for their ſakes. By this too *Jeſus Chriſt* meant to teach the people of *Nazareth*, that God does not uſually beſtow his favours on thoſe who are not diſpoſed to make a good uſe of them. Laſtly, We ſee in this chapter, that *Elijah* brought to life the ſon of that widow with whom he lodged. This was an unheard of miracle, and muſt make *Elijah* be conſidered as the prophet of the Lord, and fill him likewiſe with confidence in God, in the troubleſome times in which he lived. This reſurrection of the ſon of the widow of *Zarephath*, is likewiſe a proof and type of the general reſurrection, which now and then God thought fit to give the *Jews* examples of, to confirm them in the belief and expectation of another life.

CHAP. XVIII.

I. GOD ſends *Elijah* to king *Ahab*, to acquaint him that the famine and the drought were almoſt at an end; and the prophet gives the king notice of his coming, by *Obadiah* the governor of *Ahab*'s houſe, who was a man that feared God. II. *Elijah* preſents himſelf before the king, and reproaches him with his idolatry. III. He gathers together all the people, and the prophets of *Baal*, upon mount *Carmel*, and there having proved to them by a miracle that *Baal* was nothing more than an idol, and confounded the falſe prophets, he cauſed them all to be put to death. IV. After which God ſent rain, and the famine ceaſed.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are ſeveral conſiderations to be made on this chapter; as, I. That God having reſolved to put an end to the drought and famine,

which had afflicted the kingdom of *Iſrael*, was pleaſed to promiſe rain by *Elijah*, as he had foretold the drought; that *Ahab* and all his people might learn that there was no other God but the Lord, whoſe miniſter the prophet was. II. Let us take notice of the piety of *Obadiah*, governor of the king's houſe, who living in a wicked court, and under an idolatrous prince who deſtroyed the prophets of the Lord, hid and fed an hundred of theſe prophets, and had ſo great a reſpect for *Elijah*. This example ſhews, that in the worſt of times and places, there are always ſome good people to be found; and this noble action of *Obadiah* is an example to great men to love religion, and to protect its true miniſters. III. But above all, we muſt obſerve the wonderful zeal and courage with which *Elijah* reproached *Ahab* for his impiety, without dreading the wrath of the king, who was provoked againſt him. But God, who inſpired *Elijah* with ſo much reſolution, reſtrained the malice of *Ahab*, and even diſpoſed him to do what *Elijah* deſired, and to aſſemble together the prophets of *Baal* and *Jezebel* on mount *Carmel*. IV. The method *Elijah* propoſed to prove that *Baal* was nothing but a mere idol, ſhews how great his faith was, and that he was firmly perſuaded God would hear him. V. This prophet wrought a very remarkable miracle, when, in the preſence of *Ahab* and the *Iſraelites*, he cauſed fire to come down from heaven upon his ſacrifice, which the falſe prophets could not do with all their prayers and ſuperſtitious ceremonies. Then it appeared very plainly that *Baal* was only an idol, and that his miniſters were mere impoſtors. The effect of this miracle was very remarkable, ſince all the people cried out, *The Lord, he is God*; and then, at *Elijah*'s command, put the prophets of *Baal* to death. Moreover, it is to be conſidered, that *Elijah*, in commanding the falſe prophets to be put

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to death, did only follow the direction given in the law, where God expreſsly commanded, that thoſe ſhould be put to death who drew away the people to idolatry. Theſe words of *Elijah* to the *Iſraelites*, *How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him*; *and if Baal be God, follow him*; deſerve to be ſeriouſly conſidered. As God could not endure the lukewarmneſs of the *Iſraelites*, who were divided between the worſhip of God and the worſhip of idols, ſo neither would he have us divide our love between him and the world. Laſtly, We ſee that God, in his great goodneſs to his people, ſent rain; but he ſent it not till the people had given public marks of their repentance: and as, at the word of *Elijah* the heaven had been ſo long ſhut up, ſo the rain came at the word of the ſame prophet. All this ſeries of miracles was deſigned to recover the ten tribes from their idolatrous worſhip, and to preſerve the knowledge of the true God in that kingdom, which would otherwiſe have been almoſt entirely extinguiſhed under the reign of *Ahab*. The apoſtle St. *James* makes a particular reflection on the heavens being ſhut and opened by *Elijah*'s prayers, when he ſays in the fifth chapter of his Epiſtle, *The fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man ſubject to like paſſions as we are, and he prayed earneſtly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the ſpace of three years and ſix months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruits.*

CHAP. XIX.

I. QUEEN *Jezebel*, wife of king *Ahab*, endeavouring to put *Elijah* to death, he flies into the wilderneſs; but God ſent an angel to him, who comforted him, and brought him food; after which, he

he was forty days and forty nights without eating any thing, and came to mount *Horeb*. II. There the Lord appeared to him, and acquainted him that he was not the only prophet of the true God; and that there were ſtill in *Iſrael* many perſons who did not worſhip the idol *Baal*. III. He orders him to anoint *Hazael* king of *Syria*, *Jehu* king of *Iſrael*, and *Eliſha* a prophet.

Reflections.

WE ſee here, I. That queen *Jezebel*, inſtead of being moved at the miracles wrought by *Elijah*, in confounding the prieſts of *Baal* on mount *Carmel*, and making it rain after ſo great a drought, which had laſted ſo long, vowed to put the prophet to death. This reſolution of her's, ſhews the extreme wickedneſs and hardneſs of her heart. But when men are arrived to a certain degree of wickedneſs, they grow more and more obſtinate; and that which ought to ſoften their hearts and humble them, only ſerves to make them more inſolent. II. The grief which the prophet *Elijah* then endured, and his prayer to God to take him out of the world, ſhewed his great zeal, though attended with ſome frailty. Thoſe who love God ſincerely are all animated with the ſame zeal, and nothing afflicts them more ſenſibly, nor makes them more uneaſy, than to ſee iniquity abound among men. III. God, to comfort and ſtrengthen *Elijah*, ſent an angel to him, and ſupported him miraculouſly for forty days by one meal; he was likewiſe pleaſed to appear to him in a viſion, and aſſure him to his comfort, that he had yet reſerved ſeven thouſand ſouls in the kingdom of *Iſrael*, who had not bowed the knee to *Baal*. Here we learn, that God loves and comforts thoſe who afflict themſelves for the intereſt of his glory; that in the moſt corrupt times, there is always a remnant of elect,

that

that ſerve God with purity, and that therefore we ſhould never loſe courage at any time. This is St. *Paul*'s remark on this paſſage, in the eleventh chapter of the epiſtle to the *Romans*. Laſtly, God commanded *Elijah* to anoint *Hazael* to be king of *Syria*, *Jehu* king of *Iſrael*, and *Eliſha* to be prophet in his room. Theſe three perſons were choſen by God to execute his judgments upon the houſe of *Ahab*, as the ſequel of this hiſtory informs us. Now ſince God gave kings to the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes, and raiſed them up prophets endued with extraordinary gifts, as *Elijah* and *Eliſha* were, it is plain he took care of his people, and had not forſaken them. We ſee too, by *Elijah*'s anointing *Hazael* king of *Syria*, that God gave kings when he thought fit to the neighbouring nations, and that the prophets of the Lord were reſpected among them. Thus God pulls down and ſets up kings; and takes care at all times to raiſe up prophets and teachers in his church, in the ſtead of thoſe whom he takes to himſelf out of the world.

CHAP. XX.

I. *BENHADAD*, king of *Syria*, makes war againſt *Ahab* king of *Iſrael*. II. A prophet foretels to *Ahab*, that God would deliver him by a ſmall number of perſons, which happened afterwards. III. *Benhadad*, having attacked *Ahab* a ſecond time, was again defeated, and forced to ſue for peace and for his life; both which *Ahab* granted him, and even made a new covenant with him, for which he was reproved by a prophet.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to obſerve here, that though *Ahab* was an idolatrous and wicked king, yet God granted him twice the victory over the *Syrians*. This

This God did to puniſh the pride of *Benhadad* and the *Syrians*, becauſe they had attacked him unjuſtly; and above all becauſe they had blaſphemed the God of *Iſrael*, ſaying the Lord was the God of the hills, and not the God of the valleys. He did it likewiſe to give *Ahab* proofs of his goodneſs and long ſuffering; and to teach him and all the people how much they were to blame to continue in their idolatry, and not to worſhip the Lord alone, who thus diſplayed his power in their favour. And that they might not doubt but God was the giver of the victory, a prophet of the Lord was ſent to promiſe it to *Ahab*, and to aſſure him it ſhould be obtained by a ſmall number of people. This hiſtory ſhews, that God confounds the proud, and puniſhes ſuch as fall upon others unjuſtly; and that he gives marks of his bounty even to the greateſt ſinners, to invite them to repentance. God reproved *Ahab* by a prophet, for ſparing *Benhadad* and making a league with him; becauſe God would have had *Ahab* cut off *Benhadad*, who was a haughty and unjuſt prince, and humble the pride and bring down the power of the *Syrians*.

CHAP. XXI.

I. A Man named *Naboth* having refuſed to ſell his vineyard to king *Ahab*, *Jezebel* the queen cauſed him to be ſtoned to death, upon the depoſition of two falſe witneſſes. II. *Elijah* was ſent to him by God, to reproach him with this and all his other crimes, and declares, that all his family ſhould be rooted out; that the dogs ſhould lick his blood, and ſhould eat *Jezebel* his wife. III. *Ahab*, terrified with theſe threatnings, humbled himſelf; whereupon

whereupon God told him, that they ſhould not be executed till after his death.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory furniſhes us with many ſerious reflections. I. The conſideration of the crimes *Ahab* committed to procure *Naboth*'s vineyard, teaches us never to covet our neighbours goods; that ſuch deſires are criminal, and often produce fatal conſequences, and lead us into the commiſſion of great ſins. *Ahab*'s guilt was the greater in this reſpect, as what he required of *Naboth* was contrary to the law of God, which required inheritances to be preſerved in the families they belonged to. II. The means *Jezebel* made uſe of to procure *Naboth*'s death, bringing falſe witneſſes to accuſe him of blaſphemy, ſhew that ſhe was a woman of the moſt conſummate wickedneſs and impiety; but what increaſes our horror, is to ſee that falſe witneſſes were found on this occaſion, and judges wicked enough to condemn the innocent. As there have always been unjuſt princes, ſo there have always been perſons capable of undertaking any thing to pleaſe them. III. Though *Jezebel* gave order for putting *Naboth* to death, yet *Ahab* was alſo guilty of the murder; not only becauſe he was the occaſion of it, but becauſe he conſented to the pernicious counſel of his wife, and after *Naboth*'s death took poſſeſſion of his vineyard. He who conſents to a crime, and thinks to make his advantage of it, is as guilty as he who orders or commits it. IV. *Elijah*, juſt at the time when *Ahab* was going to take poſſeſſion of the vineyard of *Naboth*, denounced againſt him the ſevere judgments of God. This ſhews, that puniſhment follows cloſe after great crimes, and eſpecially violence, injuſtice, and the ſhedding of blood; and that the poſſeſſion of goods unjuſtly gotten is ſeldom laſting or happy. V. The deſcription in this chapter of *Ahab*'s exceſſive wickedneſs,

edneſs, where it is ſaid of him, that "there was none like unto *Ahab*, which did ſell himſelf to work wickedneſs in the ſight of the Lord;" this deſcription juſtifies the ſevere threatnings God denounced againſt him, and ſhould inſpire us with great fear of falling into this higheſt pitch of wickedneſs. However, we are told at the end of this hiſtory, that *Ahab*, terrified at the menaces of *Elijah*, humbled himſelf, and faſted and lay in ſackcloth; and that God, ſeeing his humiliation, told *Elijah* he would not bring the evil upon his houſe in his days. This is a very remarkable circumſtance, an example of the infinite goodneſs of God towards the greateſt ſinners, when they humble themſelves before him. Here let us take notice, that if the repentance of *Ahab* appeaſed the Lord for a time, becauſe there was ſomething of ſincerity in it, though it was not of long continuance; much more may we imagine, will thoſe who repent with all their heart, and perſevere in their repentance, infallibly obtain from the divine mercy the pardon of their ſins.

CHAP. XXII.

I. *JEHOSHAPHAT*, the fourth king of *Judah*, joins with *Ahab* king of *Iſrael* to make war againſt the *Syrians*; but deſires firſt to enquire of the Lord. Upon this the prophet *Micaiah* being conſulted, foretold, that God would not proſper the enterprize, though an hundred falſe prophets promiſed *Ahab* good ſucceſs. This prince, enraged againſt *Micaiah*, ordered him to be put in priſon, and then gave the *Syrians* battle, but was killed in the engagement, and *Jehoſhaphat* narrowly eſcaped with his life. II. At the end of this chapter, we have a brief account of *Jehoſhaphat*'s reign, who was a pious king, and of *Ahaziah*'s reign, who was the eighth king of *Iſrael*.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE ill ſucceſs of *Jehoſhaphat*'s union with wicked *Ahab*, ſhews, that we cannot too ſtudiouſly avoid uniting with wicked men, if we would not be involved in their miſeries. II. *Jehoſhaphat* ſhewed his piety in deſiring *Ahab* to ſend for a prophet of the Lord, before he would engage in the battle againſt the king of *Syria*; but he was guilty of a great fault in going to the war, inſtead of following the advice of *Micaiah*. It is always right to conſult what the will of God is; but it is of no importance to know his will, if we do not follow it. III. It is obſervable in this hiſtory, that king *Ahab* gave credit to the falſe prophets who promiſed him victory, rather than to *Micaiah*, who ſpoke to him in the name of the Lord. Moſt men love to be flattered, and are angry with thoſe who ſpeak the truth with ſincerity; but God delivers up thoſe who thus act to their own blindneſs. Thus it happened to *Ahab*; God ſeeing his obſtinacy, ſuffered him to be ſeduced by falſe prophets; but did not inſpire them with their lying ſpirit, nor was he the cauſe of this king's obduracy. The event proved the truth of *Micaiah*'s prediction: *Ahab* was killed; the dogs licked his blood, as the prophet *Elijah* had foretold, and *Jehoſhaphat* would have loſt his life in the battle had not God preſerved him. Such is commonly the end of thoſe deſigns we engage in contrary to the will of God. Laſtly, We collect from this chapter, that *Jehoſhaphat* was a religious prince, ſince he baniſhed, as much as poſſibly he could, idolatry and uncleanneſs out of his kingdom. This was far from being the caſe with *Ahaziah*, king of *Iſrael*; and therefore he was not long before he felt the divine vengeance; as we find in the ſequel of this hiſtory.

The end of the Firſt Book of KINGS.

THE

THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS.

ARGUMENT.

The Second Book of Kings contains the hiſtory of the kings of Judah *and* Iſrael, *from the end of the reign of* Jehoſhaphat *and* Ahab, *to the ruin of the two kingdoms. In this Book we are informed, how the kingdom of* Iſrael *was governed by impious and idolatrous kings, and at laſt deſtroyed by the king of* Aſſyria, *who carried the ten tribes into captivity; as we read in the firſt ſeventeen chapters. We have likewiſe in this Book, the hiſtory of the kings of* Judah, *from* Jehoſhaphat *to* Zedekiah; *in whoſe reign the city and temple of* Jeruſalem *were taken and deſtroyed by the* Chaldeans, *and the* Jews *carried captives to* Babylon. *All this happened in the ſpace of three hundred years.*

CHAP. I.

1. THE *Moabites* rebel againſt *Ahaziah* the eighth king of *Iſrael*; who being ſick, ſends to conſult the idol *Baalzebub*, to know what would be the event of his ſickneſs; but *Elijah*

Elijah meeting the meſſengers of *Ahaziah*, reproved them for having recourſe to idols, rather than the true God; and told them the king would die. II. Afterwards, the prophet cauſed fire from heaven to come down and conſume two parties of ſoldiers and their captains, whom *Ahaziah* had ſent to apprehend him; and then he himſelf went to the king, and foretold him of his death, which happened after *Ahaziah* had reigned two years. He was ſucceeded by *Jehoram* his brother.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

IN this chapter we may obſerve, I. That the threatnings God denounced againſt king *Ahab*, began to be executed in the reign of his ſon *Ahaziah*. The *Moabites* rebelled againſt him, and he had a fall, which proved mortal, of which he died, after he had ſeen two of his companies deſtroyed by fire from heaven. II. That that prince, inſtead of growing better by his ſickneſs, and by the corrections of the Almighty, arrived at ſuch a pitch of wickedneſs as to conſult idols. God chaſtens ſinners to bring them to himſelf; but when they take occaſion, even from his corrections, to offend him with new crimes, this denotes the laſt degree of obſtinacy and incorrigibleneſs. III. It is to be obſerved, that though *Elijah* conſumed by fire from heaven the captains and ſoldiers whom the king had ſent to take him, he did not do it out of a ſpirit of revenge, nor of his own accord, but by a divine impulſe and command: this appears in God's diſplaying his omnipotence, and making fire to fall from heaven at the word of *Elijah*. God wrought this miracle to ſecure the prophet, and to puniſh the idolators; to put a ſtop to the fury of *Ahaziah*, and to teach that prince and his ſubjects to fear the true God. So that this action of *Elijah* does not juſtify revenge; as our Lord

teaches his diſciples, when, in imitation of *Elijah*, they would have cauſed fire to come down from heaven upon the *Samaritans*, who had refuſed to receive them. After a very ſhort reign *Ahaziah* died; and his death happening according to the prediction of *Elijah*, may be looked upon as a juſt judgment from God on that wicked and idolatrous prince.

CHAP. II.

I. THE prophet *Elijah* is taken up into heaven. II. *Eliſha*, his diſciple and ſucceſſor, receives his ſpirit, and works ſeveral miracles; which ſhewed that God had appointed him to be a prophet in *Iſrael*, as *Elijah* had been.

REFLECTIONS.

THE taking up the prophet *Elijah* into heaven is a wonderful event; in which we ſee how God was pleaſed to reward the extraordinary zeal of this great prophet; and to teach men at the ſame time, that he reſerves in heaven a bleſſed ſtate for thoſe that ſhall have ſerved him faithfully. It appears from the circumſtances of this hiſtory, from what preceded and what followed the aſcenſion of *Elijah*, that it was known, not only to *Eliſha*, but to a great many of the ſons of the prophets, who were on the other ſide of *Jordan*, when *Elijah* was taken up. Beſides this, we have in the aſcenſion of *Elijah* a type of that of *Jeſus Chriſt*; which is yet a ſtronger proof to us, that there is a better life after this prepared for the righteous. *Eliſha*'s perſeverance in following *Elijah*, that he might be witneſs of his departure, and his earneſt requeſt that he might receive a double portion of his ſpirit, is a proof of the zeal and faith of *Eliſha*; which he was rewarded for, ſince he ſaw his maſter taken up, and

was

was endued with the ſame gifts as he had been. We ought with the ſame zeal and perſeverance to ſeek for the neceſſary gifts of God's holy ſpirit; and if we apply to *Jeſus Chriſt* for them, he will grant them to us in an abundant meaſure. The miracles wrought by *Eliſha*, immediately after the aſcenſion of *Elijah*, dividing the waters of *Jordan*, and healing thoſe of *Jericho*, tended to aſſure him, that God would be with him as he had been with *Elijah*; and to convince the ſons of the prophets, and all the people of *Iſrael*, that *Eliſha* was a prophet in an extraordinary manner ſent by him. The death of the forty-two children of *Bethel*, who were devoured by two ſhe-bears, was deſigned by God to confirm the calling of *Eliſha* among an idolatrous people; to terrify the king of *Iſrael* and his people; and to puniſh the inhabitants of *Bethel*, the place where idolatry was publicly practiſed, and where the prophets of the Lord were deſpiſed and rejected. It was expedient ſuch examples as theſe ſhould now and then be made, and that God ſhould give proofs of his wrath, in a kingdom where the worſhip of idols was appointed and ſupported by public authority.

CHAP. III.

I. *JEHORAM*, the ninth king of *Iſrael*, aſſiſted by *Jehoſhaphat*, king of *Judah*, and the king of *Edom*, makes war upon the *Moabites*, who had revolted from his brother *Ahaziah*. II. The army of theſe three kings being ready to periſh for want of water, *Eliſha* procured them water, and promiſed them the victory. III. The *Moabites* were defeated, and their king offered his ſon a ſacrifice upon the walls of the city of *Kirharaſeth*, whither he had retired; after which the war ended.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this hiſtory we are to obſerve, I. That *Jehoram* was not ſo bad as *Ahab* his father, ſince he put down the idolatry of *Baal*; but he preſerved the worſhip of the golden calves, which *Jeroboam* had introduced. This prince had ſome good notions; but had not piety nor reſolution enough to aboliſh idolatry intirely. *Jehoram* repreſents thoſe ſinners who are willing to do ſomething for God, and renounce ſome ſins, but retain others, and cannot reſolve to renounce them all. II. The army of the kings of *Judah*, *Iſrael* and *Edom* wanting water, *Eliſha* was called for, and God gave them water by the miniſtry of that prophet; after which they defeated the *Midianites*. As the ſacred hiſtory informs us, that God granted *Jehoram* this victory for the ſake of *Jehoſhaphat*, king of *Judah*, who feared the Lord; we ſee, that God does often do good to thoſe that are unworthy of it, for the ſake of pious perſons, in love to whom he diſplays his power and his goodneſs, even for wicked men. It may likewiſe be added, that God favoured *Jehoram* upon this occaſion, becauſe he was not ſo bad as his father *Ahab*, or his brother *Ahaziah*, and had put down the worſhip of *Baal*. God is ſo gracious, that he even rewards the little good there is in ſinners, and by that means ſhews, that if they did ſincerely turn to him they would feel the effects of his love. This victory, which God vouchſafed to *Jehoram* by the prophet *Eliſha*'s means, ſhould have induced *Jehoram* to have rooted out idolatry intirely, which he did not; but by perſiſting in his ſins, he drew upon himſelf the divine vengeance. The horrible and unnatural action of the king of *Moab*, who ſacrificed his own ſon, is a very remarkable circumſtance; which ſhews, that among thoſe idolatrous nations all ſenſe of humanity and tenderneſs was loſt; and that rage and deſpair hurry

on

on wicked men to the moſt deteſtable actions. The wicked uſually give themſelves up to exceſs of grief; whereas thoſe who know God, and fear him, have always recourſe to him with reſignation and ſubmiſſion, in their greateſt troubles and the moſt diſagreeable events.

CHAP. IV.

THIS chapter contains the relation of ſeveral miracles of *Eliſha*. I. He multiplied the widow's oil. II. Going to lodge at the houſe of a woman of *Shunem*, he promiſed that God would give her a ſon; which ſon dying, he raiſed him to life again. III. He made the pottage wholeſome which before could not be eat. IV. He fed an hundred men with twenty loaves of barley and ſome ears of corn.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN the ſeveral miracles wrought by the prophet *Eliſha*, we ought to take notice of and to admire the power of God, and at the ſame time his goodneſs towards the *Iſraelites*; ſince all thoſe miracles tended to reſtore them to the worſhip of the true God, and to recover them from idolatry. II. We are to obſerve, that if *Eliſha* multiplied the oil of a widow who was diſtreſſed by her creditors, and if he obtained a ſon for the *Shunamite*, and afterwards raiſed him from the dead, it was becauſe theſe women and their huſbands feared the Lord; ſo that it appears very clearly from theſe examples, that God diſplays his power in favour of thoſe that fear him, and that he delivers them from their diſtreſs. Obſerve, III. That God, after he had given a ſon to the *Shunamite*, was pleaſed he ſhould die, that he might reſtore him to her again by a miracle. The

proceeding of this woman, who, as ſoon as her ſon was dead, went immediately to ſeek for *Eliſha*, ſhews her ſurpriſing faith, and her hope that the ſame prophet who had promiſed the birth of the child, would reſtore him to life; and ſhe was not diſappointed of her hope. God often afflicts his children in the moſt ſenſible manner, that he may afterwards give them ſtronger tokens of his love, by delivering them and giving them a happy iſſue out of their afflictions, and making them ſerve to confirm them in the faith, and in the fear of the Lord. IV. We muſt conſider, that though the miracles of *Eliſha* were many and great, yet they are much inferior to thoſe of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who by a word alone, and in an inſtant, healed the ſick and raiſed the dead; and that if *Eliſha* fed an hundred perſons with twenty loaves of barley, our Lord fed ſeveral thouſands with a few barley loaves and ſmall fiſhes, as is recorded in the Goſpel.

CHAP. V.

I. *Naaman*, general of the king of *Syria*'s army, is cured of a leproſy, after having waſhed himſelf ſeven times in *Jordan*, by the direction of *Eliſha*. By this miracle he was convinced that the God of *Iſrael* was the only true God; and promiſed, that he would offer no more ſacrifices to any but to the Lord; and therefore begged of the prophet he might have leave to take with him ſome of the earth of the land of *Iſrael*, to build an altar to ſacrifice to the true God. II. *Naaman* would have made him ſome preſents, which *Eliſha* refuſed; but *Gehazi*, his ſervant, having taken a part of thoſe preſents ſecretly, the prophet puniſhes him for it, by ſmiting him and his poſterity with the leproſy.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE healing of *Naaman* is one of the moſt remarkable of all *Eliſha*'s miracles. God was pleaſed this miracle ſhould be wrought, to teach the *Syrians*, who were ſtrangers and idolators, that the God of *Iſrael* was the only true God; which was the reaſon why the prophet *Eliſha* ordered *Naaman* to waſh himſelf in the waters of *Jordan*, that being a river in the land of *Iſrael*. *Naaman* at firſt deſpiſed the prophet's order to waſh in *Jordan*, imagining that was not a proper way to heal him; and yet that very way he found he was cured of his leproſy. We ſhould never deſpiſe the means that God thinks fit to make uſe of to communicate his favours to us, though they appear weak and ſimple; but we ſhould rather therein acknowledge and admire his power and goodneſs. II. *Naaman* being healed, promiſed to worſhip no other but the true God; and to go no more into the temples of idols, unleſs it were to wait upon the king his maſter; which he thought he might do without idolatry, as it was only a duty of a civil nature, and belonging to his office; and he had actually renounced the worſhip of idols, and declared he would never more ſacrifice to any but the true God. From this behaviour of *Naaman*, we may learn to teſtify our gratitude to God when he beſtows any bleſſing on us; and never to do any thing that may offend him, or wound our own conſciences. III. *Eliſha*'s refuſal of the rich preſents of *Naaman*, muſt needs have made great impreſſion upon the mind of this General, and inſpired him with ſtill greater reverence for the true God, whoſe miniſter *Eliſha* was. This is a noble example of diſintereſtedneſs, which ought above all to be imitated by the miniſters of the Lord. Laſtly, What happened to *Gehazi*, who for lying unto *Naaman*,

man, and taking preſents from him ſecretly, became a leper, and entailed the leproſy on all his poſterity, demands our attention. *Eliſha* ſmote *Gehazi* with this diſeaſe, becauſe what he had done tended to bring diſgrace upon the true religion, and was the mark of a mean ſelf-intereſted ſpirit, and a corrupt heart; eſpecially after his maſter had refuſed *Naaman*'s preſents. This ſhews us that God knows our ſins, though committed in ſecret, and will puniſh them; and particularly that his wrath purſues not only the unrighteous, but in general all thoſe that are given to covetouſneſs and diſhoneſt gain; and that goods acquired by wicked means do carry a curſe with them; which curſe often deſcends from parents to their children.

CHAP. VI.

WE have here a relation of ſeveral miraculous actions of the prophet *Eliſha*. I. He cauſed the iron of a hatchet to ſwim upon the water. II. He revealed to the king of *Iſrael* the deſigns of the king of *Syria*; at which the king of *Syria* being provoked, ſent a great hoſt to take the prophet in the city of *Dothan*; but God ſent an heavenly hoſt to his aſſiſtance: and *Eliſha*, having ſmote the *Syrians* with blindneſs, led them to *Samaria*; but forbad the king of *Iſrael* to do them any harm. III. Some time afterwards the king of *Syria* beſieged *Samaria*, where the famine was ſo great that two women eat one of their children. The king of *Iſrael* believing that *Eliſha* was the cauſe of all theſe misfortunes, ſwore that he would put him to death.

REFLECTIONS.

WE continue to ſee here the great wonders that God wrought in the kingdom of *Iſrael* by the means of *Eliſha*. The end of theſe miracles

was

was to preſerve among the *Iſraelites* the knowledge of the God of their fathers, and to keep up the fear of God in the hearts of thoſe good men that ſtill remain in that kingdom. This was the reaſon there were at that time ſo many diſciples of the prophets, here called *ſons of the prophets*, who lived among the ten tribes. With the ſame view, and to confound the *Syrians*, who were idolators, God warned *Jehoram*, king of *Iſrael*, of the deſigns of the king of *Syria*, by *Eliſha*, to whom they were revealed; and even delivered into the hands of the prophet, and by his means into the hands of *Jehoram*, the *Syrians* who were come to beſiege the city of *Dothan*. God, on this occaſion, miraculouſly protected *Eliſha*, by ſending the heavenly hoſts to his aſſiſtance, and ſmiting the *Syrians* with blindneſs; which is a proof of the care God takes of his faithful ſervants, and of thoſe that fear him. The prophet gave likewiſe at this time a proof of his meekneſs and gentleneſs; he only deſired to make the *Syrians* ſenſible of God's power; he conducted them to *Samaria*, and delivered them to the king of *Iſrael*; who was not ſuffered to hurt them, but treated them in *Samaria*, and diſmiſſed them afterwards with all the humanity and civility imaginable. Thus ſhould we treat all men, even our enemies, with equity and moderation. In the relation of the dreadful famine that was in *Samaria*, we ſee the judgments of God upon that city, and the accompliſhment of the curſes that *Moſes* had denounced againſt the *Iſraelites*; and particularly, where he ſays that mothers ſhould eat their own children, in the time of the ſiege and ſtraightneſs wherewith their enemies ſhould diſtreſs them. Laſtly, It is ſomething very remarkable, that king *Jehoram*, after all that God had done for him, and the miracles of *Eliſha*, which he had either been witneſs of, or had been well informed of them, diſtruſted

the

the divine assistance when he found himself besieged, and vowed to put *Elisha* to death as the cause of those calamities which he himself was the occasion of; whereby he gave proofs of his extreme ingratitude, and hardness of heart. The wicked are ungrateful in prosperity; and, instead of humbling themselves in adversity, fret and harden themselves under those troubles which ought to recover them to a sense of their duty.

CHAP. VII.

I. THE city of *Samaria* being besieged by the *Syrians*, and pressed by famine, the prophet *Elisha* foretels that the inhabitants should have great plenty; and a captain deriding the prediction, he tells him he should see the plenty, but not be the better for it. II. The *Syrians* being terrified by a noise which God had caused them to hear, fled the same night; and both *Elisha*'s prophecies were fulfilled.

REFLECTIONS.

TO make a good use of what we have now read, three things are chiefly to be observed; I. That *Samaria* being besieged, and reduced to the utmost extremity by famine, God foretold, by the prophet *Elisha*, that the famine should soon cease, and be followed by a great plenty. God was pleased that *Elisha* should foretel this deliverance and this plenty, that all might know they proceeded from God, and that the inhabitants of *Samaria* might give God the glory. This was likewise a very extraordinary instance of the divine goodness and long-suffering towards the people engaged in idolatry, and a cruel and impious prince. II. The second reflection is, that although this prediction was very surprising, and contrary to all appearance; yet it was fulfilled in

one

one day; and *Samaria* was delivered at once both from war and famine, and that in a wonderful manner; which no one would ever have thought of; God having terrified the army of the *Syrians* by a noiſe he made them hear; and ſo ordering it, that the lepers ſhould go into the enemy's camp, and bring news to the people of *Samaria*, that the *Syrians* had raiſed the ſiege. From whence we may infer, that God has always ready the ſure means of executing his promiſes, how difficult ſoever they may ſeem to be; and that therefore we ſhould never doubt of their truth, nor fall into diſtruſt or incredulity. III. That which happened to the captain mentioned in this hiſtory, is very remarkable. He had laughed at the prophecy of *Eliſha*, and ſaid, that if the Lord were to make windows in heaven, ſo great a plenty would be impoſſible. But his own experience convinced him of the truth and certainty both of *Eliſha*'s promiſe and threatning; and the deliverance of *Samaria* proved his puniſhment. Infidels and profane men attack the Deity with their raſh and impious ſentiments and diſcourſes; they call in queſtion what God hath revealed, becauſe they think they ſee difficulties in the way; but they ſhall be convinced by their own experience that God is true in all that he ſays; and thoſe who would not believe his word, ſhall experience the truth of thoſe threatnings he has denounced againſt wicked men and unbelievers.

CHAP. VIII.

I. THE *Shunamite*, whoſe ſon *Eliſha* had raiſed, being returned to the country of *Iſrael*, which he left on account of the famine, obtained of king *Jehoram* that all her goods ſhould be reſtored to her. II. *Eliſha* being at *Damaſcus*, and *Benhadad* king of *Syria* ſending *Hazael* to conſult him

him concerning the event of his ſickneſs, though his ſickneſs was not in itſelf mortal, foretold that he ſhould die, and that *Hazael* ſhould reign in his ſtead, and do great harm to the *Iſraelites*. III. *Joram*, the fifth king of *Judah*, coming to the throne, introduced idolatry; for which God chaſtened him by the revolt of the *Edomites*, and of the men of *Libnah*. IV. He dying after he had reigned eight years, *Ahaziah* his ſon, who was likewiſe an idolator, ſucceeded him, and reigned but one year.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we learn, that God has a perfect knowledge of futurity; that his providence rules and governs all things, and watches over thoſe that fear him. This we have a proof of in the notice he gave the *Shunamite* of the tedious famine God was going to afflict the land of *Iſrael* with. Another ſurpriſing effect of Providence, we ſee in that woman's coming to petition the king of *Iſrael* for her eſtate, juſt at the time *Gehazi*, the ſervant of *Eliſha*, was telling that prince how his maſter had raiſed from the dead the ſon of that very woman. *Jeboram*'s cauſing the *Shunamite*'s goods to be reſtored to her, was an act of juſtice, and a leſſon to kings, judges, and all men, to render to every one what belongs to them. The ſeveral circumſtances of this hiſtory ſerve to confirm the truth of *Eliſha*'s miracles. That *Benhadad*, king of *Syria*, ſhould ſend to know of the prophet *Eliſha*, whether he ſhould recover of his illneſs, proves that this prophet was greatly eſteemed even by the neighbouring princes; and that there were in *Syria* many perſons who had great reverence for the God of *Iſrael*. The prophet foretold the death of *Benhadad*, and *Hazael*'s ſucceſſion to the throne of *Syria*. This ought to have convinced the *Syrians*, the *Iſraelites*, and *Hazael* himſelf,

himſelf, that the Lord was the true God, and that by him kings reigned, not only in *Iſrael*, but in all other kingdoms. It is next to be obſerved, that though this prediction of *Eliſha* did certainly give occaſion to *Hazael* to kill king *Benhadad* in a horrid and treacherous manner, God could not be ſaid to be the author of that crime; and that if he did ſuffer *Hazael* to reign and to commit ſo many cruelties, it was to puniſh *Benhadad* by his means, who had been ſo cruel to the *Iſraelites*; and to puniſh the *Iſraelites* themſelves, and the family of *Ahab* in particular. Thus when events of this nature happen, and there ariſe tyrannical and cruel princes, or unjuſt men, who do a great deal of miſchief, it is to be remembered that this happens by the divine permiſſion; and that God, who employs what inſtruments he pleaſes to bring about the wiſe ends of his providence, often makes uſe of the wicked to this end; ſo that by committing the ſins which their own wicked hearts lead them to, they execute, without knowing it, and ſometimes contrary to their very intention, his judgments, and the deſigns of his providence. The ſacred hiſtory remarks that *Joram*, ſon of the good king *Jehoſhaphat*, was a wicked prince; that he was drawn into idolatry by *Athaliah* his wife, the daughter of *Ahab* king of *Iſrael*; and that after the death of *Joram*, *Ahaziah* his ſon walked in his ſteps. This is a very ſenſible proof, that alliances with perſons void of religion and virtue are fatal to families, and introduce impiety; however, neither *Joram* nor *Ahaziah* eſcaped unpuniſhed. The *Edomites* revolted from *Joram*; his reign was ſhort and very unfortunate; he died of a cruel and tedious ſickneſs; and his ſon *Ahaziah* too periſhed in a miſerable manner; as the whole is related in the twenty-firſt and twenty-ſecond chapters of the Second Book of *Chronicles*; ſo that

that we have in both theſe kings a very remarkable inſtance of the judgments of God upon thoſe who offend him, and in particular on thoſe who degenerate from the piety of their predeceſſors.

CHAP. IX.

I. A Prophet, one of *Eliſha*'s diſciples, is ordered to anoint *Jehu* king of *Iſrael*, in the ſtead of *Jehoram*; and orders him to root out all the houſe of *Ahab*. II. *Jehu*, being proclaimed king, aſſembles his forces and goes to *Jezreel*, where he ſlays *Jehoram*, and cauſes his body to be caſt into the field of *Naboth*. III. He alſo cauſes *Ahaziah*, king of *Judah*, who came to viſit *Jehoram*, to be put to death, and orders *Jezebel*, the widow of king *Ahab*, to be thrown out of the window; who was eat up of dogs, as the prophet *Elijah* had foretold.

REFLECTIONS.

THE anointing *Jehu*, whom God had choſen king of *Iſrael*, ſhews that God ſets up and putteth down kings as he thinks fit for the execution of his judgments, and to bring about the deſigns of his providence. What *Jehu* did againſt the houſe of *Ahab* ought to be looked upon as the work of God, as appears from the ſeveral circumſtances of this hiſtory, which are very remarkable. *Jehu* was made king without expecting it; *Jehoram*, the ſon of *Ahab*, was ſlain, and thrown into that very field which his father had taken from *Naboth*. *Jehu* then calls to mind *Elijah*'s prediction, that God would puniſh the ſons of *Ahab* on that very ſpot. *Jezebel*, that wicked queen, who had done ſo much miſchief, was thrown headlong out of her palace-window, and eat by the dogs. Thus all that the prophet *Elijah* had foretold of *Ahab* and his family came

came to paſs; and God ſeverely revenged that king's impiety, who had introduced among the *Iſraelites* the idolatrous worſhip of *Baal*. This hiſtory ſhews, that the divine threatnings are never in vain; that the curſe of God purſues wicked princes, and families where impiety reigns. Let us take notice likewiſe that *Ahaziah*, king of *Judah*, becauſe he imitated the kings of *Iſrael* in their ſins and idolatry, and was united with *Jehoram* king of *Iſrael*, periſhed with him. Thoſe who become the companions and imitators of the wicked, are involved, ſooner or later, in the ſame judgments with them.

CHAP. X.

I. *JEHU* puts to death ſeventy ſons of *Ahab*, and ſeveral of the relations of *Ahaziah* king of *Judah*. II. After which, having gathered together all the worſhippers of *Baal*, upon pretence of a ſacrifice, he cauſed them all to be ſlain, and aboliſhed the worſhip of that idol. III. Notwithſtanding, he continued the idolatrous worſhip which *Jeroboam* had eſtabliſhed, by which he provoked the Lord to anger againſt him. III. Having reigned twenty-eight years, he died, and *Jehoahaz* his ſon ſucceeded him, and was the eleventh king of *Iſrael*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the death of the ſeventy ſons of *Ahab*, we ſee the intire deſtruction of the family of that impious prince; which had been predicted by the prophet *Elijah*. This is the third family of the kings of *Iſrael* which was utterly extinct. The family of *Jeroboam* was firſt deſtroyed, then *Baaſha*'s, and afterwards that of impious *Ahab*; and all of them by the juſt judgment of God for their idolatry. The king of *Judah* felt too the effects of the divine vengeance;

vengeance; but the family ſtill ſubſiſted as God had promiſed. As for that action of *Jehu*, who ſlew the worſhippers of *Baal*, it muſt be conſidered, I. That he put them to death juſtly; God having commanded that ſuch as introduced the worſhip of falſe gods ſhould be put to death. II. That this action was ſo far blameable, as *Jehu* made uſe of a lye to bring thoſe idolators together; and even of a criminal pretence in giving out that he would perform a ſolemn ſervice to *Baal*. Beſides, there is a great deal of reaſon to imagine, that *Jehu* put to death the prieſts of *Baal*, as well as the ſons of *Ahab*, as much for reaſons of policy and ſtate, as in obedience to God, and out of zeal to his ſervice; ſince by deſtroying thoſe who were attached to the intereſts of *Ahab* and *Jezebel* his wife, he ſtrengthened himſelf in the kingdom. But what proves, above all, that the zeal which *Jehu* expreſſed in executing the divine will was not ſincere, is, his not putting away that idolatry which *Jeroboam* had eſtabliſhed in the kingdom of the ten tribes, and only taking away the groſs idolatry of *Baal*; and therefore we ſee the ſcripture remarks, that *Jehu* did not walk in the law of God with all his heart: though God promiſed the kingdom ſhould deſcend to his ſons to the fourth generation, becauſe he had executed the judgments of God upon the houſe of *Ahab*. *Jehu*'s character repreſents thoſe whoſe zeal is not pure; who think to ſatisfy their duty by a partial obedience to the will of God, and by renouncing ſome of their groſſeſt ſins, and glory in it, as *Jehu* did of his zeal for the Lord of hoſts. But when men do not renounce every thing that is diſpleaſing in God's ſight, particularly the ſins they are moſt prone to, they do not act from a ſpirit of true zeal, nor can they reaſonably expect his approbation. Therefore we find that God chaſtiſed this prince by the king of

Syria,

Syria, who gained ſeveral victories over him, and got poſſeſſion of a part of his dominions.

CHAP. XI.

I. AFTER the death of *Abaziah*, the ſixth king of *Judah*, *Athaliah* his mother, who was the daughter of *Ahab*, and given to idolatry, uſurped the kingdom, and put to death all the princes of the ſeed royal of *Judah*: one only eſcaped, which was *Jehoaſh*, who was then but a year old, and was concealed, and brought up ſix years by the care of his aunt, the wife of *Jehoiada* the high prieſt. II. At the end of ſix years, *Jehoiada* cauſed *Jehoaſh* to be proclaimed king, ſlew *Athaliah*, and reſtored religion and the true worſhip of God.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from the hiſtory of the reign of *Athaliah*, who by her cruelties procured the crown, that God does ſometimes permit the enterprizes of the wicked to ſucceed, and uſurpers to take poſſeſſion of ſtates and kingdoms. But in the ſame hiſtory we remark, that he ſets bounds to their wickedneſs, and at laſt delivers the oppreſſed. *Jehoaſh*, the ſon of *Ahaſiah*, eſcaped the cruelty of *Athaliah*, by the particular interpoſition of Providence; and at the end of a few years, *Athaliah* received the reward due to her crimes, and religion was reſtored to its purity. It is a great mercy to any people, when God delivers them from wicked princes, and ſets up good ones in their ſtead. And as this happy revolution was brought about by the care of *Jehoiada*, who did an act of juſtice in delivering the kingdom from a wicked and foreign queen, and reſtoring the crown to the lawful heir; we may learn, that it is a great advantage to a ſtate to be under the management of prudent perſons,

and ſuch as are zealous for religion and the public good.

CHAP. XII.

JEHOASH, the ſeventh king of *Judah*, aſcending the throne at the age of ſeven years, in the beginning of his reign was very zealous for religion; but growing corrupt afterwards, as we ſee in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Second Book of *Chronicles*, he was attacked by *Hazael* king of *Syria*, and was ſlain in a conſpiracy, leaving *Amaziah* his ſon to ſucceed him.

REFLECTIONS.

KING *Jehoaſh* for a conſiderable time gave proof of his piety, and exerted himſelf with zeal in reſtoring the ſervice of God, and ſupporting the intereſts of religion. But he did not perſevere; and was even guilty of very great crimes, as we find recorded in the *Chronicles*; and accordingly he made a miſerable end. The hiſtory of this prince, who had begun ſo well and ended ſo bad, may convince us, that perſons who have good intentions, and even zeal, may not only grow remiſs and careleſs, but alſo err in the groſſeſt manner, when they ſuffer themſelves to be off their guard, and give ear to evil counſels, as *Jehoaſh* did. This is particularly the caſe of princes, who, after they have been enlightened with the knowledge of God, and have been favoured in a ſignal manner, at laſt forſake him.

CHAP. XIII.

1. JEHOAHAZ, the eleventh king of *Iſrael*, was an idolator; for which reaſon, God ſtirred up againſt

againſt him the king of *Syria*; but having implored the aſſiſtance of the Lord he was delivered; notwithſtanding which, he perſevered in his idolatry. He died in the ſeventeenth year of his reign, leaving the kingdom to *Joaſh* his ſon, who reigned ſixteen years. II. *Joaſh* going to ſee the prophet *Eliſha* that was ſick, was told by him, that he ſhould overcome the *Syrians*, but that he ſhould not intirely deſtroy them. *Eliſha* died at that time, and a dead man having touched his bones, came to life again.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE are to obſerve in the hiſtory of *Jehoahaz*, that he was an idolator, like his predeceſſors; that finding himſelf attacked by the *Syrians*, he had recourſe to God in his prayers, and that God, in love to the children of *Iſrael*, who were oppreſſed by the *Syrians*, delivered him; but that this prince, notwithſtanding the divine aſſiſtance he had experienced, and though he ſaw himſelf extremely weakened, ſtill perſiſted in his idolatry. Such is the uſual behaviour of the wicked. They have recourſe to God in their diſtreſs; but return to their ſins as ſoon as they are delivered, and inſtead of growing better, are inſenſible both of his forbearance and his corrections. In the hiſtory of king *Joaſh*, ſon of *Jehoahaz*, we ſee, that that prince followed the ſinful courſes of his father; but that God, however, promiſed him, by the prophet *Eliſha*, that he ſhould vanquiſh the *Syrians*; on which it is remarked in this chapter, that *Joaſh* gained theſe advantages, becauſe God had compaſſion on the *Iſraelites*, on account of the covenant he had made with their fathers. God is good and gracious, and thus behaves towards men, bearing long with them before he forſakes them utterly. III. We have here the relation of the death of *Eliſha*, whom God called

hence, after he had exerciſed the prophetic office for above ſixty years. The viſit *Joaſh* king of *Iſrael* made to *Eliſha*, and his great concern at his death, prove that this prince, though engaged in idolatry, had a reſpect for *Eliſha*, and that the prophets of the Lord were ſomewhat regarded in the kingdom of *Iſrael*. The memory of that holy prophet ought to be eſteemed bleſſed in the church: his zeal and other virtues ought to be our example, and animate all Chriſtians, eſpecially thoſe who are in any office in the church, to ſerve God faithfully in their ſeveral ſtations. Laſtly, The reſurrection of that man who came to life becauſe his dead body had touched the bones of *Eliſha*, muſt needs have made a great impreſſion upon the *Iſraelites* to whom he was ſent. But this miraculous event ought likewiſe to convince us, that God, who has promiſed to raiſe the dead, has power to give them life, and will do it at the laſt day.

CHAP. XIV.

THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of two kings: I. The firſt was *Amaziah*, the eighth king of *Judah*; who at firſt behaved with prudence and piety, and gained a victory over the *Edomites*, but falling into idolatry, as we read in the Book of *Chronicles*, and declaring war againſt *Joaſh* king of *Iſrael*, he was taken priſoner by *Joaſh*, who pillaged the city and temple of *Jeruſalem*; and at laſt he was conſpired againſt and ſlain, and *Azariah* his ſon ſucceeded him. II. We have here a brief hiſtory of *Jeroboam* the ſecond, the thirteenth king of *Iſrael*, who reigned forty-one years.

REFLECTIONS.

THE beginning of *Amaziah*'s reign was praiſe-worthy; he was attached to the ſervice of God, and behaved with juſtice and clemency, ſparing the children of thoſe who had murdered his father *Joaſh*; for which God rewarded him by a victory over the *Edomites*. But as ſoon as he forſook God, he experienced every kind of misfortune; he ſaw his country ravaged by the king of *Iſrael*, and at laſt miſerably periſhed in a conſpiracy, as his father had done. This is a freſh inſtance, in which we ſee plainly that thoſe who ungratefully rebel againſt God, after they have begun well, draw down his juſt vengeance upon them. There are two reflections to be made on *Jeroboam* the ſecond's reign: one is, that he perſiſted in the idolatrous worſhip ſet up in *Iſrael*; the other, that, notwithſtanding this, God preſerved and recovered, under the reign of this prince, the kingdom of *Iſrael*, which was then very low; which he did in love to his people, who were very much afflicted, and becauſe he had not yet determined to deſtroy them. This is an inſtance of God's great goodneſs, and long-ſuffering towards guilty princes and their people. Further, it appears from this chapter, that *Jonas*, who was ſent to *Nineveh*, propheſied at this time in the kingdom of the ten tribes; and that it was he too, who promiſed *Jeroboam* the advantages God vouchſafed him. In all this we ſee the truth of what the ſcripture ſo often repeats, that God ceaſed not to ſend prophets to the *Iſraelites*, to turn them from idolatry, and recover them to his ſervice; and that the cauſe of their rejection was their refuſing to hearken to the remonſtrances of his ſervants, and perſiſting obſtinately in their ſins.

CHAP. XV.

I. AZARIAH, otherwiſe called *Uzziah*, the ninth king of *Judah*, at firſt adhered to the worſhip of God; but was ſmitten with leproſy, for uſurping the office of the prieſthood. The hiſtory of this king we find at length in the twenty-ſixth chapter of the Second Book of *Chronicles*. II. We find in this chapter the hiſtory of *Zechariah*, *Shallum*, *Menahem*, *Pekahiah*, and *Pekah*, all kings of *Iſrael*. *Jeroboam*, the ſecond of that name, king of *Iſrael*, being dead, there was an inter-regnum of about eleven years; at the end of which time *Zechariah*, his ſon, was made king of *Iſrael*, and reigned ſix months: in him the family of *Jehu* was extinct, in the fourth generation, as God had foretold. He was ſlain by *Shallum*, who reigned but one month; and he was ſlain by *Menahem*, who reigned ten years, and became tributary to the king of *Aſſyria*. *Pekahiah* his ſon was the ſeventeenth king of *Iſrael*; he was killed by *Pekah*, in whoſe time part of the people were carried captive into *Aſſyria*. *Pekah* was ſlain by *Hoſhea*, who was the nineteenth and laſt king of *Iſrael*. All theſe princes were idolators. III. *Uzziah* king of *Judah* dying, is ſucceeded by his ſon *Jotham*, a religious prince; he was the tenth king of *Judah*, and reigned ſixteen years.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the hiſtory of king *Azariah*, who, like ſome of his predeceſſors, begun well, but did not perſevere, and ended his life in a ſtate of ſequeſtration from the crown; we ſee what is the fate of thoſe who begin well, but grow remiſs and forſake their duty. What is to be obſerved on the reign of *Zechariah*, *Shallum*, *Menahem*, *Pekaiah*, and *Pekah*, kings of *Iſrael*,

Iſrael, is, that all thoſe princes were incorrigibly addicted to idolatry, notwithſtanding the divine corrections, and though they muſt needs perceive that God was withdrawing his protection from them. II. That theſe kings were all unhappy, and periſhed almoſt all of them miſerably, murdering one another. III. That God then began to deliver the kingdom of *Iſrael* to their enemies, and that one part of the *Iſraelites* were carried captive into *Aſſyria*; which was a plain intimation, that this kingdom was drawing near its end. There is nothing more certainly forebodes the judgments of God, than when neither his corrections, nor his forbearance and long-ſuffering, can bring men to repentance, nor engage them to return to their duty; and when they have irreligious and impious rulers. The ſacred hiſtory makes one particular reflection upon the death of king *Zechariah*; which is, that in him the family of *Jehu* was extinct, as God had promiſed *Jehu*, that his ſons ſhould ſit upon the throne of *Iſrael* to the fourth generation. This is the fourth family of the kings of *Iſrael*, that was deſtroyed for their idolatry. The family of *Jeroboam* was firſt deſtroyed; next *Baaſha*'s; afterwards *Ahab*'s; and laſt of all, that of *Jehu*: whereas the family of the kings of *Judah*, to whom the promiſes of God were made, continued to ſubſiſt. It was continued in *Jotham*, who imitated *Uzziah* his father in his good qualities, but not in his faults.

CHAP. XVI.

I. *AHAZ*, the eleventh king of *Judah*, a wicked and idolatrous prince, being attacked by the kings of *Syria* and *Iſrael*, calls in the aſſiſtance of *Tiglathpileſer*, king of *Aſſyria*, who took *Damaſcus*, the capital of *Syria*, and ſlew the king of *Syria*. II. *Ahaz* cauſes an altar to be built to the idol of the

Syrians; places this altar in the temple of *Jeruſalem*, and eſtabliſhes idolatrous worſhip there. He dies in the ſixteenth year of his reign, and is ſucceeded by his ſon *Hezekiah*.

REFLECTIONS.

AHAZ was the wickedeſt king that had ever been till then in the kingdom of *Judah*. He ſerved falſe gods, and even imitated the cuſtom of idolators, in making their children paſs through the fire in honour of their idols. Inſtead of humbling himſelf before God, as the prophet *Iſaiah* exhorted him to do, promiſing that God would deliver him from the kings of *Syria* and *Iſrael*, he arrived at laſt to that degree of impiety, as to cauſe an altar to be made, like that which the *Syrians* had at *Damaſcus*, and to be put in the temple. The hiſtory of this prince ſhews what thoſe men are capable of who give way to their paſſions, and to their hard heart. We muſt likewiſe obſerve the behaviour of *Urija* the prieſt, who placed the idolatrous altar in the temple at *Jeruſalem*, inſtead of hindering the king from executing ſo impious a deſign. Impiety is ſtill more odious in the miniſters of religion than in princes; and they become exceeding guilty, when either fear or complaiſance for the great men of the world, or any other conſideration whatever, engages them to do what is contrary to the law of God.

CHAP. XVII.

I. THE hiſtory of the deſtruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes, which happened in the reign of *Hoſhea*, the laſt king of *Iſrael*, and contemporary with *Hezekiah*, the king of *Judah*. *Hoſhea* having conſpired againſt the king of *Aſſyria*, to whom he was tributary, that prince beſieged and took *Samaria*,

maria, and carried the *Iſraelites* captives into *Aſſyria* and other places. II. Some years after, the king of *Aſſyria* ſending people to inhabit *Samaria*, and the land of *Iſrael*, it came to paſs, that becauſe they did not ſerve the true God, they were devoured by lions. This obliged the king of *Aſſyria* to ſend them an *Iſraelitiſh* prieſt, who might teach them to ſerve the Lord; but they mixed their own ſuperſtitions and the ſervice of their idols with that of the true God; and this was the original of the ſect of the *Samaritans*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE event recorded in this chapter, is one of the moſt remarkable in the Old Teſtament; namely, the entire ruin of the kingdom of *Iſrael*, otherwiſe called the kingdom of the ten tribes, which was deſtroyed two hundred and fifty years after its ſeparation from that of *Judah*. The ſcripture takes particular notice of the cauſe of this deſtruction; which was owing not only to *Hoſhea*'s conſpiracy againſt the king of *Aſſyria*, but chiefly to the ingratitude and idolatry of the *Iſraelites*, and their other ſins; eſpecially their incorrigible hardneſs of heart, and repeated contempt of the patience and long-ſuffering of God, of his word, and of the threats and remonſtrances of his prophets. This example ſhould teach all men, that obſtinacy in ſin, and contempt of God's word, force him, as it were, at laſt to execute his threatnings; and that the covenant God makes with any people, does not hinder him from rejecting them, and puniſhing them with the greateſt ſeverity, if they continue offending him. We are next to take notice of the wiſdom of God in the ruin and diſperſion of the *Iſraelites*. He drove them in this manner out of their country, to ſhew, that the divine covenant ſhould not be always confined to their nation; and by that means to ſpread ſome rays of his knowledge among the heathens,

thens, and thereby prepare them one day to receive the goſpel. God ſent lions againſt the new inhabitants of the land of *Iſrael*, to make them ſenſible of his power, and engage them to fear him; and to prevent the knowledge of God from being entirely loſt in that country. Laſtly, What is here ſaid of the religious worſhip of the *Samaritans*, who profeſſed to ſerve God, and at the ſame time worſhipped their images, teaches us, that God will be ſerved with purity, and without any mixture of ſuperſtition and hypocriſy: and that, in general, thoſe who profeſs to worſhip and fear God, ought to do it ſincerely, without dividing their affection between him and the world.

CHAP. XVIII.

THIS chapter contains three things: I. The zeal of *Hezekiah*, the twelfth king of *Judah*, in attempting to aboliſh idolatry. II. A ſhort account of the ruin of the kingdom of *Iſrael*. III. *Sennacherib*, king of *Aſſyria*, makes war againſt *Hezekiah*, and ſends ſome of the principal officers of his army to *Jeruſalem*, to ſummon him and his ſubjects to ſubmit to him, and to inſult, not only *Hezekiah*, but even God himſelf.

REFLECTIONS.

AS ſoon as *Hezekiah* came to the crown, he thought of deſtroying the idolatry which his father had introduced, and averting the wrath of God which threatned his kingdom. He broke in pieces the braſen ſerpent, becauſe the people offered incenſe to it; although that ſerpent was a moſt remarkable monument of what had formerly happened in the wilderneſs, when the fiery ſerpents deſtroyed a great number of the children of *Iſrael*. This action of *Hezekiah*, which is mentioned in ſcripture with great commendation,

mendation, ſhews plainly that whatever is an occaſion of idolatry, ſin, and ſcandal, ought to be taken quite away; and that we ought to pay no honour to any image or relick whatever. *Hezekiah*'s ſincere attachment to the law, and to the worſhip of God, was very acceptable in his ſight. God bleſſed him with proſperity, and made him victorious over the *Philiſtines*, and ſecured him when the king of *Aſſyria* came to take *Samaria*, and deſtroy the kingdom of the ten tribes. However, the ruin of the kingdom of *Iſrael*, which happened in the time of *Hezekiah*, ought to have been a warning to thoſe of the kingdom of *Judah*, to teach them, that if they provoked the Lord by their diſobedience, he would deſtroy them likewiſe. This truth they had ſtill greater reaſon to be convinced of, when the ſame king of *Aſſyria* made war ſome years after againſt *Hezekiah*, and took from him ſeveral cities. God expoſed this prince to this great danger to try him, to give him marks of his protection, and engage his ſubjects to truſt in him alone. This he did likewiſe, to make it evidently appear that God protected the kingdom of *Judah*, and that the *Aſſyrians* could never have ſubdued the ten tribes, if God had not permitted it ſo to be. Thus does the Lord diſpoſe all things for the good of men, to the advantage of thoſe that fear him, and to the glory of his name. *Hezekiah*, when he was attacked by the king of *Aſſyria*, acknowledged he had been guilty of a fault in rebelling againſt him; and even ſent that prince a great ſum of money, which he had exacted of him. *Hezekiah*, in this behaviour, gave proof of his prudence and integrity; and *Sennacherib* ought to have retired. But this unjuſt and haughty king ſtill continued the war, which occaſioned his own deſtruction, as we learn in the ſequel of this hiſtory. Laſtly, The inſolent and impious behaviour of the ambaſſadors of *Sennacherib* is to be taken notice

tice of: when they ſpake of the true God, they compared him to idols, ſaying, that as the gods of the ſeveral nations which *Sennacherib* had conquered, could not deliver their people out of his hand, ſo neither ſhould the God whom *Hezekiah* worſhipped be able to deliver him. The inſolent blaſphemies of this idolatrous king, which did ſo much aſtoniſh *Hezekiah*, haſtened his ruin, and engaged the Lord to deſtroy him. God is jealous of his glory, and revenges the inſults that are offered him; and therefore, when we meet, even among Chriſtians, with impious wretches, who openly inſult the Deity, we ought not to loſe courage, but rather believe that God will not fail to rebuke their boldneſs, and confound thoſe who dare provoke and affront the Almighty.

CHAP. XIX.

I. KING *Hezekiah* informs the prophet *Iſaiah* of the threats of *Sennacherib*, king of *Aſſyria*, and lays before the Lord the letters, full of blaſphemy, which he had received from that prince. II. God promiſes *Hezekiah* to deliver him; and *Sennacherib*'s army is defeated by an angel, and he, returning into his own country, is murdered by his own ſons.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we have to obſerve in this chapter is, I. That good king *Hezekiah*, alarmed with the threats of *Sennacherib*, whoſe power he could not reſiſt, and grieved with the blaſphemies which that idolatrous prince had uttered againſt God, recommended himſelf to the prayers of *Iſaiah*, carried to the temple the inſulting letters, full of impiety, which *Sennacherib* had ſent him, and put up to God a prayer expreſſive of his great zeal, profound humility, and firm truſt in him. Good men have always recourſe to God

God in their diſtreſs, and put their truſt in his aſſiſtance; but they call upon him with extraordinary fervency and confidence, when his glory is concerned in their deliverance. II. God, by the prophet *Iſaiah*, aſſured *Hezekiah* of his aſſiſtance; and that prophet's meſſage from God on this occaſion was very remarkable. In it we find, God was particularly provoked by the blaſphemies of *Sennacherib*, and the inſolent manner in which he had ſpoken againſt him; herein he deſcribes the infinite power of God, and the eaſe with which he would confound that haughty and impious prince. Theſe promiſes of the prophet, and the confidence of *Hezekiah*, were not in vain and without effect: God ſtirred up the *Ethiopians* to come and fight againſt *Sennacherib*, which obliged him to leave *Judea*; an angel deſtroyed all his army in one night; and at laſt this idolatrous prince, being returned to his own country, was aſſaſſinated by his ſons, while he was worſhipping his idols. In this memorable example we ſee, that thoſe who fear God never truſt in him in vain; that his power is infinite; that he is jealous of his glory; and that thoſe who provoke him by their impiety and their pride, and particularly proud and wicked princes, ſhall not eſcape his vengeance. Laſtly, This wonderful deliverance brought *Hezekiah* into great eſteem among the neighbouring princes, ſo that from all parts offerings were made to God in the temple of *Jeruſalem*. Thus God makes all things work together for good to thoſe that love him, and to advance the glory of his name.

CHAP. XX.

1. HEzekiah being ſick, *Iſaiah* declares to him that he ſhould die; but God, being moved by his prayers, prolongs his life for fifteen years, and confirms his promiſe by a miracle. II. The king of

of *Babylon*, ſending ambaſſadors to *Jeruſalem* with letters and preſents, *Hezekiah* ſhews them his treaſures; for which he was reproved by the prophet *Iſaiah*, who foretels him, that his treaſures, and his children too, ſhould be carried into that country. *Hezekiah* dies, having reigned nine and twenty years, and is ſucceeded by *Manaſſeh* his ſon.

REFLECTIONS.

JUST after *Hezekiah* had been attacked by the king of *Aſſyria*, he was viſited with a very dangerous illneſs, and the prophet *Iſaiah* was ſent from God to warn him that he ſhould die. This was a freſh trial, which ſerved to manifeſt and increaſe *Hezekiah*'s faith and piety. For this very end God viſits his children with divers ſore afflictions. II. *Iſaiah*'s warning to that king, to ſet his houſe in order before his death, ſhews, that it is agreeable to the will of God, that perſons who are like to die ſhould ſettle their temporal affairs; but the chief care of dying perſons ſhould be to ſecure what relates to their eternal welfare. III. The prayer which *Hezekiah* made upon that occaſion, proves how advantageous a thing it is, at the end of life, to have lived in holineſs; and with what confidence good men call upon God in time of trouble. IV. In the ſpeedy healing of *Hezekiah*, and the miracle wrought by God in his behalf, we ſee the efficacy of the prayers of good men, to procure the mercies of God, and revoke his threatnings. This likewiſe ſhews, that God keeps in his own hand the lives of all men, and prolongs or ſhortens them as he pleaſes. V. The arrival of the ambaſſadors of the king of *Babylon* at *Jeruſalem*, is an evidence that *Hezekiah* was in great reputation among foreign princes. However, the ſcripture takes notice that he ſinned in ſhewing them his treaſures and all his precious things; and to bring him to a ſenſe of his fault, and to humble

him

him for it, the prophet told him, all his treaſures, and his children too, ſhould be carried away to *Babylon*; which came to paſs in the reign of *Manaſſeh* his ſon, and the reign of his ſucceſſors. From whence we may learn, that the good things of the world are vain, and of a ſhort duration; and that they that poſſeſs them ſhould never be puffed up by them, nor place their confidence in them.

CHAP. XXI.

I. *Manaſſeh*, the thirteenth king of *Judah*, again introduces idolatry, and gives himſelf up to work all manner of wickedneſs. God, provoked by his ſins, declares, he would *ſtretch over Jeruſalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the houſe of Ahab*; that is, that *Jeruſalem* and the kingdom of *Judah* ſhould be deſtroyed, as the kingdom of *Iſrael*, and *Samaria*, the capital of that kingdom, had been not long before; and that God would puniſh *Manaſſeh*, as he had done impious *Ahab*, king of *Iſrael*. II. After the death of *Manaſſeh*, *Amon*, his ſon, followed the ſteps of his father, and was killed when he had reigned but two years, and was ſucceeded by *Joſiah*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two remarks to be made on what is recorded in this chapter concerning the reign of *Manaſſeh*. I. That inſtead of walking in the ſteps of *Hezekiah* his father, he fell into all manner of abominations, and exceeded in wickedneſs all the wicked kings of *Judah* that had been before him. II. That the Lord then declared, the utter ruin of *Jeruſalem* and the kingdom of *Judah* was determined and irreverſible. Here let us conſider, that children do not always inherit the piety of their parents; that thoſe who in their youth caſt off the fear of God, and have the

the means of gratifying their paſſions, are capable of proceeding to the greateſt height of impiety; and that wicked princes expoſe their ſtates to the utmoſt miſeries. Further, the threatnings which God denounced againſt *Manaſſeh* were put in execution; he was carried away into *Babylon*, and put in chains; but having humbled himſelf, God brought him again to *Jeruſalem*, as is mentioned in the Book of *Chronicles*; and after a few years *Jeruſalem* was utterly deſtroyed. *Amon*, the ſon of *Manaſſeh*, imitated his father in his idolatry, but not in his repentance, and received the puniſhment he deſerved, being ſlain in a conſpiracy.

CHAP. XXII.

I. *JOSIAH*, the fifteenth king of *Judah*, a prince of great piety, when he was very young undertakes to reſtore the ſervice of God, and to repair the temple. II. As they were labouring in this good work, they found in the temple the book of the law of *Moſes*; and *Joſiah*, having heard it read, ſent to conſult *Huldah* the propheteſs; who ſent him word, that the threatnings contained in that book were going to be executed upon the *Jews*; but that God would remove him before that deſtruction came upon them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory of king *Joſiah*, who with ſo much care baniſhed out of *Jeruſalem*, and every part of his kingdom, all the abominations which prevailed therein, that he might avert the wrath of God, which he found was ready to fall upon his ſubjects, ſhould ſerve for an inſtruction and example to Chriſtian princes, and excite them to baniſh from their dominions all impiety and irreligion, and neglect nothing which may tend to promote that great end. *Joſiah* was very ſenſibly affected with fear and dread at the hearing

ing of the threatnings contained in the Books of *Moſes*, and ſent to *Huldah* the propheteſs, to know what he was to do in ſo dangerous a conjuncture. Thoſe who fear God tremble at his word, and endeavour to find out the means of appeaſing his wrath, when they ſee it kindled. But the anſwer of the propheteſs deſerves to be particularly attended to. She ſent the king word, that the iniquities of the *Jews* were come to ſuch a height, that the divine threatnings would ſoon be put in execution; but that before they were, God would remove him. This affords us theſe two leſſons: one is, that when the wickedneſs of men is paſt remedy, neither the endeavours, nor the prayers of the righteous, can prevent the judgments of God from taking their courſe; the other is, that death is not always a mark of God's diſpleaſure; and that he ſometimes ſhortens the lives of thoſe he moſt loves, that they may not be involved in the judgments he intends to pour upon the heads of the wicked.

CHAP. XXIII.

I. KING *Joſiah* aſſembles the people to hear the Book of the Law read, and to renew their covenant with God; he removes idolatry out of the temple, and out of all the land of *Judah*; demoliſhes the altar that *Jeroboam* had built at *Bethel*; and cauſes the bones of dead bodies to be burnt upon it, to ſignify, that that place was defiled and abominable; and puts the idolatrous prieſts to death, as God had commanded in the law. He cauſes the paſſover to be celebrated with great ſolemnity, and applies himſelf with much zeal to root out idolatry and ſuperſtition, and to obſerve all that the Lord had commanded. II. *Joſiah*, going to fight againſt the king of *Egypt*, is ſlain, and is ſucceeded by his ſon *Jehoahaz*, who was the ſixteenth king of *Judah*, and revived

idolatry; but he reigned but three months, being depoſed by the king of *Egypt*, who ſet up his brother *Eliakim*, otherwiſe *Jehoiakim*, in his room; he alſo was given to idolatry, and reigned eleven years.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD having informed *Joſiah*, by *Huldah* the propheteſs, that the curſes contained in the law of *Moſes* were going to fall upon the *Jews*, he gathered all the people together to hear the law read; renewed the covenant with God in the moſt ſolemn manner in the temple; promiſed to obſerve that covenant, and keep the commandments of the Lord; which promiſe he likewiſe obliged all the people to make. After this, we ſee with what ſurpriſing zeal and application he laboured to aboliſh idolatry, uncleanneſs and debauchery, and to re-eſtabliſh religion, not only in his own kingdom, but in the country of the ten tribes. Thus do men of piety, and particularly good princes, inſtruct themſelves in the law of God, and employ all their power to put a ſtop to wickedneſs and impiety, to promote the fear of God, and ſecure the obſervance of his holy laws. The piety of *Joſiah* is the more praiſe-worthy, as God had told him the deſtruction of the kingdom of *Judah* was determined, and that he himſelf ſhould ſhortly die; and yet he did not abate in his zeal, but ſtill called upon the people to return to the true ſervice of God, and employed the remainder of his days in acts of piety and religion. A good man, whatever circumſtances he is placed in, and whatever the event of things may be, takes care to be always engaged in his duty, and dedicates his whole life, and all the powers which God has given him, to promote the glory of God, and the public good. It appears likewiſe, from the particular account we have in this chapter of all that *Joſiah* did at *Jeruſalem*, and through all the land, to

deſtroy

deſtroy idolatry, and remove every thing that was ſcandalous and ſinful, that all manner of abominations, and the moſt horrid and execrable crimes, were introduced there under the preceding reigns, and openly practiſed; and therefore we muſt not be ſurpriſed at God's deſtroying that city. *Joſiah*'s demoliſhing and profaning the altar of *Bethel*, ſacrificing thereon the idolatrous prieſts, as commanded in the law of God, and burning the bones of dead men upon it, deſerves to be particularly conſidered; becauſe it was the completion of a prediction that had been made above three hundred years before, by the prophet that came to *Bethel*, when king *Jeroboam* eſtabliſhed there his falſe worſhip; who openly declared, that a king, named *Joſiah*, ſhould deſtroy that altar, ſacrifice the prieſts of the high places, and burn upon it the bones of dead men. It is even remarked, that the ſepulchre of that prophet remained to that day, and that *Joſiah* commanded them to uſe it with reſpect, which was a monument of this prediction. This event is very remarkable, and ſtrongly proves the truth of the word of God, and the certainty of his threatnings. *Joſiah* gave likewiſe a ſignal proof of his zeal in that ſolemn paſſover which he celebrated; and the ſcripture gives a moſt extraordinary and glorious character of this prince, when it ſays of him, *That there was not any king, either before or after him, who turned to God with all his heart, like him.* However, we are told, that notwithſtanding the piety and care of this king, *the Lord did not turn from the fierceneſs of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled againſt Judah, becauſe of the ſins with which Manaſſeh had provoked him.* The piety of good men is never without effect with reſpect to themſelves, but they cannot always turn away the wrath of God from a guilty people; and there are ſome ſins whoſe effects and conſequences remain a long time, though

God has pardoned thoſe who committed them. *Joſiah* was the laſt good king of *Judah*. Though his ſucceſſors had before them the good example which he had left them, and had evident proofs of God's wrath, yet they provoked him more with their idolatrous worſhip; ſo that the neighbouring kings made war upon them, carried them away captive, impriſoned them, and made them tributary; till at laſt the kingdom of *Judah* was entirely deſtroyed.

CHAP. XXIV.

I. THE king of *Babylon* comes againſt *Jehoiakim*, the eighteenth king of *Judah*, with an army of *Syrians*, *Moabites* and *Ammonites*; binds him with chains of braſs, to carry him away captive to *Babylon* with part of the people, and the ſacred veſſels of the temple, which he carried thither, as is recorded in the thirty-ſixth chapter of the Second Book of *Chronicles*. However, he returned to *Jeruſalem*, and ſome years after was put to death, and denied a burial, as we read in the Book of *Jeremiah*; where we are informed of ſeveral remarkable particulars of the reigns of *Jehoiakim*, *Jechoniah* and *Zedekiah*. *Jehoiachin* his ſon, otherwiſe called *Jechoniah*, ſucceeded him, and was an idolator, as his father had been. In his reign, which was but three months and ten days, the king of *Babylon* came again to *Jeruſalem*, and carried him away, with a great number of perſons, and great ſpoils; and made *Zedekiah*, the uncle of *Jehoiachin*, king, who was the nineteenth, and laſt king of *Judah*.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to collect from the reading this chapter, is; that after the death of good king *Joſiah*, every thing grew worſe and worſe in the kingdom

kingdom of *Judah*. His ſucceſſors were very wicked; and God then began to put his threatnings in execution, ſuffering them to be invaded by the king of *Babylon*, who made war againſt them, and carried away a great number of people into captivity, and the holy veſſels out of the temple. The ſcripture expreſsly declares, that all theſe things happened by the command of God, and becauſe of the ſins of the *Jews*, and in particular the ſins of *Manaſſeh*; and that God would not pardon them. Theſe were ſo many ſigns, preſaging the total deſtruction of that people, which came to paſs a few years after; and they had reaſon to perceive, in all theſe events, that God began to withdraw his protection from them, and was going to forſake them. God is very merciful and long-ſuffering towards thoſe who offend him, and withdraws his favour and protection from them by degrees; but after they have long reſiſted all God's gracious methods to recover them from their ſins, and bring them to their duty, he utterly rejects them, as we read in the following chapter it happened at laſt to the *Jews*. From this carrying away of the *Jews* into captivity, in the reign of *Jehoiachin*, we are to compute the ſeventy years of the *Babyloniſh* captivity.

CHAP. XXV.

ZEDEKIAH, the nineteenth and laſt king of *Judah*, falling into idolatry, as his predeceſſors had done, and breaking the oath of allegiance he had taken to the king of *Babylon*, God at length deſtroyed the kingdom of *Judah*. *Nebuchadnezzar* beſieged *Jeruſalem*, took it, and plundered it, and burnt that and the temple. *Zedekiah* was carried to *Babylon* in chains, after they had put out his eyes; and the people were alſo carried into captivity, except

a few *Jews*, who remained in the land to till the ground, under the conduct of *Gedaliah*. Some years after, the king of *Babylon* uſed *Jehoiachin* kindly, who had been long there in captivity.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have in this laſt chapter one of the moſt memorable hiſtories in the Holy Scripture. Here we learn, that God delivered *Jeruſalem* to the *Babylonians*, and that all the *Jews* periſhed miſerably by the famine, or by the ſword, except thoſe that were carried into captivity, and a few that remained in *Judea*. Thus the threatnings which God had ſo often denounced againſt them, were at laſt accompliſhed, which is a great example of the judgments of God upon thoſe who abuſe his patience and mercy, and obſtinately perſiſt in their ſins. The moſt remarkable circumſtance of all theſe events is, that the temple itſelf was involved in this deſtruction; and that God ſuffered the *Babylonians* to profane and burn that houſe, which was dedicated to him, after they had carried away the moſt precious things in it. God was pleaſed in that manner to puniſh the *Jews*, who had profaned the temple and his ſervice; and to ſhew, at the ſame time, that the legal ſervice which was eſtabliſhed there, was not to ſubſiſt always; and that the worſhip which was then aboliſhed for a time, ſhould be ſo for ever at the coming of the Meſſiah, by the laſt deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* and the temple, and by the diſperſion of the *Jews*. We are to obſerve, that king *Zedekiah* was carried to *Babylon* bound in chains, after that his ſons were murdered in his preſence, and his own eyes put out, to puniſh him for his rebellion and perjury. This was a terrible, but juſt judgment of God upon that king, ſince it was he, who by his crimes, by his perjury, by his rebellion againſt the king of *Babylon*, and by his obſtinacy,

obſtinacy, notwithſtanding all that *Jeremiah* had ſaid to him, was the cauſe of the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*. The condition of the *Jews* who remained in *Judea* was moſt deplorable, all the time the captivity laſted; however, God preſerved them there, as we find in the thirty-ſeventh and thirty-eighth chapters of *Jeremiah*. Laſtly, It is ſaid that *Jehoiachin*, otherwiſe named *Jechoniah*, who had been a long time captive at *Babylon*, was ſet at large, and treated kindly by *Evilmerodach*, king of *Babylon*. God ſo ordered it, that the *Jews* who were in captivity, and *Jehoiachin* their king, ſhould there meet with ſome kindneſs and favour, to prepare the way to their reſtoration when the ſeventy years were expired; and that king *David*'s family, of which the Meſſiah was to come, might ſubſiſt.

The end of the Second Book of KINGS.

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THE FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES.

ARGUMENT.

The Books of Chronicles *are records of what paſſed under the reigns of* David *and* Solomon, *and the kings of* Judah *in particular: among which are interſperſed ſome circumſtances relating to the kings of* Iſrael. *The Firſt Book of* Chronicles *contains ſeveral genealogies from* Adam *to the time of the* Babyloniſh *captivity: This is the ſubject of the firſt nine chapters. In the reſt of the Book we have the hiſtory of* David's *reign, beginning at the death of* Saul.

CHAP. I.

THE genealogy of the patriarchs, from *Adam* to *Abraham*; the deſcendants of *Iſhmael*, the ſon of *Abraham*; and the poſterity of *Eſau*, the ſon of *Iſaac*.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE genealogies in this and the following chapter, are not without their uſe. They ſettle the antiquity as well as the truth of ſacred hiſtory, ſince

ſince they trace things from the beginning of the world, and from *Adam* the firſt man. They prove, that from the moſt early times, and afterwards, the *Jews* preſerved among them the knowledge of what had paſſed from the creation. They ſerve to clear up many points in ſacred hiſtory, and ſhew the origin of the ſeveral people and nations of the world. It appears in particular, from what is recorded in this chapter, that the poſterity of *Abraham* was, for a long time, of great power and renown; ſince there were among the deſcendants of *Iſhmael* and *Eſau*, a great number of kings and princes, according to the promiſes before made by God to *Abraham*.

CHAP. II.

THE genealogy of the deſcendants of *Judah*, one of the twelve ſons of *Jacob*, and that of *Caleb*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE genealogy of *Judah*'s deſcendants is ſet down firſt, becauſe the tribe of *Judah* held the chief rank among the tribes. We ſee by this, and the two following chapters, that this tribe was very numerous and powerful, as the patriarch *Jacob* had foretold, when he bleſſed his ſons before his death.

CHAP. III.

THE deſcendants of king *David*, before and after the captivity of *Babylon*.

REFLECTIONS.

AS the family of king *David* was the moſt conſiderable of any of the tribe of *Judah*, the genealogy of his deſcendants was preſerved with great exactneſs.

exactneſs. This God thought expedient, becauſe the Meſſiah was to be born of the poſterity of *David*, which was fulfilled in the perſon of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*; as we read in the beginning of St. *Matthew*'s goſpel. The liſt we here read of *David*'s deſcendants, proves that the *Jews* did not loſe their genealogies in the time of the *Babyloniſh* captivity; and that theſe Books of *Chronicles* were wrote after that captivity.

CHAP. IV.

A Continuation of *Judah*'s deſcendants, and an account of *Simeon*'s poſterity.

REFLECTIONS.

ALL that is particularly remarkable in this chapter, is what is ſaid of *Jabez*, who was honoured and reſpected in his time, and by his prayers obtained of God the privilege of living in peace, and without affliction. There have been at all times perſons valuable for their faith and piety, and who have conſidered the divine favour as the ſource of all their happineſs: and in all ages God has anſwered their prayers, and poured his benefits upon them.

CHAP. V.

THE genealogies of *Reuben* and *Gad*, and the half tribe of *Manaſſeh*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE tribes of *Reuben* and *Gad*, and the half tribe of *Manaſſeh*, had their portion on the other ſide *Jordan*, in the time of *Moſes*. After that they grew great, and made ſeveral conqueſts, by the aſſiſtance of the Almighty, whoſe aid they invoked in their engagements with their enemies, and in whoſe help they truſted. But we find in this chapter, that

theſe ſame tribes, falling into idolatry, and forſaking God, were given into the hand of the kings of *Aſſyria*, who carried them captive out of their own country. Thoſe who have received the greateſt favours from God, and make an ill uſe of them, become the objects of his vengeance.

CHAP. VI.

THIS chapter contains, I. The genealogy of *Levi* and his three ſons, *Gerſhom*, *Kohath*, and *Merari*; and the ſucceſſion of high prieſts, from *Aaron* to the time of the captivity in *Babylon*. II. Particular mention of the cities which had been aſſigned in the ten tribes of *Iſrael* for the Levites to dwell in.

REFLECTIONS.

THE genealogy of the Levites was preſerved with extraordinary care, becauſe they were the miniſters of religion, and each family of that tribe had its peculiar functions in the divine ſervice. From this chapter we may collect, that the Levites exerciſed theſe functions both in the tabernacle which *Moſes* built, and in the temple of *Solomon* at *Jeruſalem*; till the temple was deſtroyed, and the people carried captive to *Babylon*. After their return from the captivity, the Prieſts and Levites reſumed their functions; but the antient order was reſtored in a very imperfect manner.

CHAP. VII.

THE deſcendants of *Iſſachar*, *Benjamin*, *Naphtali*, *Manaſſeh*, *Ephraim*, and *Aſher*.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

THE names of the deſcendants of *Benjamin*, and in particular of the anceſtors and poſterity of *Saul*, who was the firſt king of *Iſrael*.

CHAP. IX.

THIS chapter contains, I. The names of thoſe of the tribe of *Judah*, *Benjamin*, *Ephraim*, and *Manaſſeh*, who dwelt at *Jeruſalem* after the *Babyloniſh* captivity. II. The names of the prieſts and Levites, and the ſeveral offices in which they were employed. III. A repetition of the genealogy of king *Saul*.

REFLECTIONS *on chapters* vii, viii, *and* ix.

AFTER what has been ſaid on the genealogies contained in the preceding chapter, there is nothing particular to be obſerved on the ſeventh and eighth chapters. In the ninth chapter we ſee, that as ſoon as the captivity of *Babylon* was at an end, and the *Jews* were permitted to return to their own country, there were many who came and dwelt at *Jeruſalem*, and ſignalized their zeal in endeavouring to reſtore the divine worſhip, as much as their condition would admit, to the order preſcribed in the law; and according to the regulations made by king *David* and by *Samuel* the prophet.

CHAP. X.

1. THIS chapter contains an account of the *Iſraelites* being defeated by the *Philiſtines*, and of the death of *Saul* and his three ſons, who were ſlain in the battle. II. The *Philiſtines* ignominiouſly expoſed the bodies of *Saul* and his ſons; but the men

of

of *Jabeſh* buried them honourably. After *Saul*'s death, the kingdom was given to *David*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE victory which the *Philiſtines* gained over the children of *Iſrael*, muſt be conſidered as God's juſt judgment on that people, who had in many inſtances offended him, and particularly on king *Saul*. The ſacred hiſtory expreſsly declares, that *Saul* died for his tranſgreſſion which he committed againſt the Lord, becauſe he kept not the word of the Lord, and even aſked counſel of one that had a familiar ſpirit, and enquired not of the Lord. This prince had committed many ſins, but this was the greateſt of all, and what haſtened his ruin. Thus ſinners, when they have once forſaken God, ſtray farther and farther from him, and at length fill up the meaſure of their iniquities. From hence we are particularly to collect, that one of the greateſt ſins we can be guilty of before God is to conſult conjurers, and give credit to thoſe who practiſe that unlawful art.

CHAP. XI.

I. *DAVID* is acknowledged king by all the tribes of *Iſrael*. II. He takes from the *Jebuſites* the city *Jebus*, afterwards called *Jeruſalem*. III. We here find the names of the moſt valiant men in the ſervice of king *David*, with an account of their moſt remarkable actions.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to take notice of in this chapter is, I. That *David*, after the various afflictions and trials he met with, both from *Saul* his predeceſſor, and from thoſe who held with *Iſh-boſheth*, the ſon of *Saul*, was at laſt made king over all the tribes

tribes of *Iſrael*, who ſubmitted to him as to the prince that God had choſen to reign over them. Thus the promiſes of God never fail of being executed; and the trials which thoſe who fear him are expoſed to, have always a happy iſſue. II. The taking the city of *Jebus*, which is *Jeruſalem*, is here ſet down, becauſe this was one of the moſt conſiderable events in *David*'s reign; that city being afterwards the capital of the kingdom, and the ſeat of religious worſhip. III. Thoſe mighty and valiant men which were in *David*'s ſervice, muſt be conſidered as a mark of the divine favour towards that prince. IV. The action of the three officers, who went to draw water at *Bethlehem*, was a proof of their great courage, as well as of their affection to their king, ſince what they did was at the hazard of their lives. *David*, however, refuſed to drink the water; which ſhewed he was not pleaſed they had expoſed themſelves for him to ſo great danger, without neceſſity. But his pouring out the water in honour of the Deity, and as an act of thankſgiving, was a greater glory to thoſe three men than if he had drank it, and a much ſtronger expreſſion of the value he ſet on their courage and affection towards him. We ſhould never either raſhly expoſe ourſelves to danger, or ſuffer others to do it without neceſſity, for our intereſt or gratification.

CHAP. XII.

THE names of thoſe who joined *David*, when he was at *Ziklag*, towards the end of *Saul*'s reign; with a liſt of thoſe who came to him ſome time after to *Hebron* to make him king.

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REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two reflections to be made on this chapter: I. We here ſee the care Providence took of *David*, ſince while he was at *Ziklag* a great number of valiant men, even of *Saul*'s relations, joined him, and ſo enlarged the army that he was not only in a condition to purſue the *Amalekites*, who had burnt *Ziklag*, but alſo to ſecure the kingdom after *Saul*'s death. II. We here obſerve that the *Iſraelites*, as God had promiſed *David*, ſubmitted to him, and owned him for their king: whence it appears, that God has all events at his diſpoſal; that the hearts of men are in the hand of the Lord, and that he ſo diſpoſes all things as to bring about his deſigns, and make them work together for the good of thoſe he loves, and who truſt in him.

CHAP. XIII.

I. *DAVID* gathers all *Iſrael* together, and propoſes to remove the ark of the covenant from *Kirjathjearim*, where it had been for ſome time, to the city of *Jeruſalem*; which all the people approving of, the ark was put into a cart drawn by oxen. II. But *David* fearing to have the ark brought to *Jeruſalem*, becauſe God had ſmitten *Uzza* for touching it, had it put in the houſe of *Obed-edom*, where it remained three months.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three things to be conſidered on this chapter; I. That as ſoon as *David* was made king over all the tribes of *Iſrael*, he deſired to have the ark of the covenant brought to *Jeruſalem*; eſteeming it his greateſt happineſs to have near him that valuable pledge of the divine preſence and protection.

This

This was a noble example of faith and piety for all conditions of men, and eſpecially for princes and great men. II. As to the death of *Uzza*, we muſt not imagine that when he held out his hand to lay hold of the ark, which was in danger of falling, he did it with an evil intention; on the contrary, it ſeems as if his whole deſign was to prevent the ark from falling, and being overturned. God therefore ſmote *Uzza* ſo that he died, not ſo much to puniſh him, as for an example, to inſpire *David* and all the people with dread, and convince them they had been guilty of a great fault, in having the ark of the covenant drawn by oxen on a cart, inſtead of having it carried by the Levites, as the law expreſsly commanded. Laſtly, It is ſaid, that God bleſſed the houſe of *Obed-edom*, and all that he had, while the ark remained at his houſe. After what had befallen *Uzza*, *David* perhaps would have been afraid to have the ark brought to *Jeruſalem*; but the bleſſing which attended the houſe of *Obed-edom*, on account of the preſence of the ark, encouraged *David* to put his deſign in execution. Let this teach us that the divine preſence and favour is the ſource of all the bleſſings we can enjoy.

CHAP. XIV.

DAVID receives ambaſſadors and preſents from the king of *Tyre*; has ſeveral children born; and gains two victories over the *Philiſtines*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE embaſſy and the preſents which the king of *Tyre* ſent to *Jeruſalem*, ſhew how greatly the neighbouring princes eſteemed and regarded king *David*. By this, too, *David* might perceive, as in this chapter we are told he did, that God bleſſed him, and that his kingdom was confirmed. II. It is here ſaid,

ſaid that *David* took ſeveral wives; on which it muſt be remarked, that this was a bad cuſtom which at that time prevailed among the *Jews*, contrary to the divine will, and the firſt inſtitution of marriage; and that the great number of children which *David* had by different mothers occaſioned, as from the ſequel of his hiſtory it plainly appears, very great misfortunes in his family. This ſhews that the laws of *Jeſus Chriſt*, which reform all theſe diſorders, and reſtore marriage to its primitive ſtate, were highly neceſſary, and are ſtrictly juſt, and moſt conducive to the good and happineſs of ſociety. III. As to *David*'s two victories over the *Philiſtines*, who were the greateſt enemies of *Iſrael*, the ſacred hiſtory remarks, that they were obtained by the divine aſſiſtance, after the king had conſulted the Lord; and that accordingly he gave God all the glory, acknowledging that it was the Lord who had deſtroyed thoſe idolators, and burned their idols. Whatever we undertake under the guidance and direction of the Supreme Being, has always a happy iſſue; and what produces the greateſt joy in good men, when they ſee their ſucceſs, is to conſider it as a mark of the love of God towards them, and make it a means of promoting his glory.

CHAP. XV.

DAVID, by the miniſtry of the Levites, removes the ark of the covenant, with very great ſolemnity, from the houſe of *Obed-edom* to *Jeruſalem*, and places it in the tabernacle, which he made ready for it.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is to be obſerved, I. That when *David* was determined to bring the ark to *Jeruſalem*, he took care to have it carried by the Levites, according to

the command given by *Moſes*; and perceived, that his not obſerving that order three months before was the reaſon God had ſlain *Uzzah*. This ſhews why *Uzzah* died upon touching the ark; and proves with how great exactneſs we ſhould conform to all God's commands. II. *David*, the Levites, the elders, and all the people, expreſſed the greateſt joy at the bringing up of the ark, praiſing God with ſongs, and offering ſacrifices; *David*, in particular, diſtinguiſhed himſelf by his zeal on this occaſion. The king's extraordinary joy, proceeded from a firm perſuaſion that the divine preſence, of which the ark was the expreſs ſymbol, would for ever after be all his happineſs. This example of faith and piety is worthy the imitation of men of all ranks, but eſpecially of thoſe in an exalted ſtation. III. *Michal*, *David*'s wife, ſeeing him dance before the ark, deſpiſed him for it in her heart, imagining what he did was indecent, and unworthy ſuch a prince as he. Hence it appears, ſhe had but a ſmall ſhare of zeal and piety; and thus do the profane men of the world often condemn and deſpiſe actions really commendable, and acceptable in the ſight of God.

CHAP. XVI.

DAVID, having brought the ark to *Jeruſalem*, in the manner related in the foregoing chapter, places it in the tabernacle which he had ſet up for that purpoſe. He appoints Levites to miniſter before the ark, and to praiſe the Lord; and to this end gives them the hymns which are here ſet down.

REFLECTIONS.

KING *David*, after he had removed the ark with great pomp, concluded the ſolemnity with hymns, which he had ordered to be ſung in honour of

of the Lord. The zeal of this godly prince ſhould excite ours; and it is but right that the great men of the earth, and in general all thoſe to whom God has granted proſperity, and the means of promoting his glory, ſhould honour and glorify him to the utmoſt of their abilities. The ſacred hymns, which were ſung by the Levites, and by the people, ſhould likewiſe ſerve for the matter of our praiſes, who have ſtill more reaſon to adore the divine majeſty, to ſpeak of all his wondrous works, and to rejoice before him, than the *Iſraelites* had; and even thoſe exhortations, which are here addreſſed to all people, to praiſe God, and rejoice in the coming of his kingdom, properly relate to the times of the Goſpel. Chriſtians are under the ſtricteſt obligation to excite each other to this duty, and ſay, *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever. Bleſſed be the Lord God of Iſrael, for ever and ever; and let all the people ſay, Amen.*

CHAP. XVII.

I. KING *David* communicates to the prophet *Nathan* his deſign to build a temple in *Jeruſalem*; but the prophet gave him to underſtand, in conſequence of a revelation he had received, that the Lord would not have him build the temple, but would give him a ſon who ſhould put his deſign in execution. II. *David*, full of gratitude for the mercies of God towards his family, returns thanks with great zeal, and beſeeches him to fulfil his promiſes, and to bleſs his houſe, and his poſterity.

REFLECTIONS.

I. DAVID was not ſatisfied with having the ark brought to *Jeruſalem*, but was deſirous likewiſe to place it in a temple, which he propoſed to build. This is a freſh argument of this prince's pi-

ety, and proves, that in the happy and glorious ſtate he was then in, he had the glory of God more at heart than any thing that concerned his own private intereſt. Such is the ſpirit which ought to animate all thoſe who have received any particular advantages from God, and have it in their power to do ſomething to promote his glory. II. Though *David*'s intention was good and commendable, God did not think fit he ſhould put it in execution, becauſe as it is elſewhere obſerved, that king had been, and was ſtill to be engaged in ſeveral wars; and the proſperity and peaceable reign of his ſon *Solomon* would be better ſuited to the execution of ſuch a deſign. God does not always approve of our putting in execution deſigns, which are in themſelves good, at the very time we could wiſh; but makes them ſucceed in a more ſuitable and convenient manner. Therefore we ought always to leave the ſucceſs of our ſchemes to Providence; not doubting but he, who has reſpect unto the heart, will accept them, when formed with a good intention. III. *Nathan*'s promiſe, that *David* ſhould have a ſon, that God ſhould be his father, and that his throne ſhould be eſtabliſhed for ever, may refer to *Solomon*, the ſon of *David*; but St. *Paul*'s application of this promiſe to our Lord, ſhews that it is fully and truly completed in none but *Jeſus Chriſt*; who, as he was of the ſeed of *David*, according to the fleſh, ſo is he the ſon of God, and his kingdom ſhall endure to all eternity. Laſtly, In *David*'s prayers and thankſgivings to God, after *Nathan* had ſpoke to him, we take notice of that prince's lively ſenſe of gratitude to God, his profound humility, his perfect confidence in the promiſes of God, and an ardent deſire to obtain for himſelf, and for his poſterity, the continuance of the divine favour and protection. This prayer furniſhes us with a very extraordinary pattern of that gratitude, faith, piety, and humility,

mility, with which we ought to thank God for all his mercies, and beſeech him to continue his favours.

CHAP. XVIII.

THIS chapter contains an account of ſeveral victories which *David* gained over the *Philiſtines*, *Moabites*, *Syrians* and *Edomites*; of the preſents ſent him by the king of *Hamath*; which *David* dedicated to God, with the gold and ſilver he had taken from the ſeveral people he had conquered. Towards the end of this chapter, we read the names of thoſe who enjoyed the chief poſts in the time of *David*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE victories here recorded, ſhew that God continued his favours to king *David*. He became formidable to his enemies, was loved and reſpected by the neighbouring kings, and his glory continually increaſed; and the foundation of all theſe advantages was, as the ſacred hiſtorian remarks, God's preſerving him whitherſoever he went. The king on his part acknowledged himſelf accountable to the divine aſſiſtance for all theſe victories, and expreſſed his acknowledgment, by dedicating to him the ſpoils taken from the ſeveral people he had conquered. Thus did God bleſs *David*, while he remained faithful; but by the ſequel of this hiſtory it will appear, that he did not experience the ſame protection when he provoked him by his ſins. From which we may learn, that all our happineſs depends upon the favour and love of God; and that the way to partake of it is to adhere to him; and employ to his glory all the temporal or ſpiritual bleſſings he vouchſafes us.

CHAP. XIX.

HANUN, the king of the *Ammonites*, by inſulting the ambaſſadors which *David* had ſent to him, occaſioned a war, in which *David* twice defeated the *Syrians* and the *Ammonites*.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to take notice of in this chapter is, that king *David* ſent ambaſſadors to the king of the *Ammonites* in a friendly way; but that he, liſtening to the evil ſuggeſtions of his courtiers, took them for ſpies, and treating them in a moſt ignominious manner, ſent them back again. On this event we may conſider, I. That ſincere and virtuous perſons ſeek peace, and behave in a friendly manner to every one; but that what they do to promote friendſhip, is not always well received. II. That men void of virtue, judge of other mens ſentiments by their own, and aſcribe to them views and deſigns, which they themſelves ſhould have in the ſame circumſtances. III. That diſtruſt and falſe policy often lead men into very bad meaſures; and that it is a dangerous thing for princes, and in ſhort, for any perſons whatever, to give ear to, and follow evil counſels. As to *David*'s war with the *Ammonites*, it was very juſt, ſince their king had treated with great indignity the ambaſſadors *David* had ſent as a mark of his friendſhip; and beſides this, the *Ammonites* firſt declared war againſt *David*. The ſucceſs of the war, in which *David* defeated the *Ammonites*, and the *Syrians* who had joined them, ſhews, that God favours men of uprightneſs and integrity, and in particular, that he aſſiſts princes who are lovers of juſtice, and friends of peace; that on the contrary, unjuſt and haughty

haughty men expoſe themſelves to the greateſt misfortunes by their pride and haughtineſs.

CHAP. XX.

I. KING *David* takes *Rabbah* from the children of *Ammon*, and defeats them. II. He likewiſe gains the victory over the *Philiſtines* in three different battles.

REFLECTIONS.

BESIDES the reflections already made on the victories *David* gained over his enemies, by the aſſiſtance of the Almighty, there is a particular reflection to be made on the manner, in which we are told in this and in the twelfth chapter of the Second Book of *Samuel*, *David* treated the *Ammonites*, putting them under ſaws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and making them paſs through the brick-kiln. Suppoſe theſe words to denote ſuch puniſhments as theſe, we muſt conceive he would not have exerciſed a revenge ſo cruel upon this people, if he had not been in a manner forced to it by ſome particular reaſons, which the ſacred hiſtory has not mentioned. Beſides the king did not treat in this manner all the *Ammonites* without diſtinction; for they were not utterly deſtroyed; but only thoſe who were moſt criminal. However this be, this action of *David* by no means authoriſes cruelty and barbarity, eſpecially among Chriſtians, who are in the Goſpel expreſsly commanded to be meek and gentle towards all men.

CHAP. XXI.

DAVID having ſinned in numbering his ſubjects, God ſends the prophet *Gad*, to let him know, that he muſt chooſe his puniſhment in one of

theſe three ſcourges, the famine, the ſword, or peſtilence. The king choſe the laſt, with which ſeventy thouſand of his ſubjects died; but he appeaſed the wrath of God by his profound humiliation, and by a ſacrifice which he offered, by God's command, in the place which *Gad* appointed.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this hiſtory we muſt remark, I. That though the numbering of the people was a thing in itſelf not unlawful, yet *David* ſinned in doing it, becauſe he did it without neceſſity, and not in the manner God had appointed; and doubtleſs too, from a principle of vain-glory, or ſome other motives not ſet down in this hiſtory, but well known to his officers; as appears from *Joab*'s concluding, that God would be offended at this numbering of the people. We ſin, not only when we do things in themſelves bad and prohibited; we may likewiſe ſin in things lawful and permitted, when we do them with any ill deſign, or otherwiſe than God commands or permits. II. God, to puniſh *David* for boaſting in the multitude of his ſubjects, reſolved to leſſen the number of them, by war, famine, or peſtilence, as God uſually does puniſh men in the way they offend him. He would have *David* make choice of one of theſe three judgments, that he might be the better ſenſible of his fault, and it might the more evidently appear he himſelf had occaſioned this calamity to the nation. His view was likewiſe, by this method, to try whether he would truſt to his own forces and to human means, or whether he would intirely reſign himſelf to the will of God. But *David* gave proof of his reſignation and his confidence in God's mercy, in chooſing the peſtilence; as this was a puniſhment which proceeded more immediately from God, and which men can leaſt guard againſt, and which might have

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fallen upon *David* and his family, as well as upon the people. III. *David* beholding the ravage which the peſtilence made, and ſeeing the angel of the Lord with the ſword drawn in his hand, gave proofs of the moſt ſincere grief and profound humiliation, acknowledging before all in the moſt public manner, that he had been the offender, and beſeeching the Lord to take vengeance on him and his houſe, rather than on his ſubjects. Theſe are noble ſentiments of repentance, eſpecially in a prince; and ſhew how ſincerely he was affected with a ſenſe of his guilt, and what a tender affection he bore towards his people. Thus too ſhould we acknowledge our ſins, and even make public confeſſion of them, when they are known, and have produced any evil, and give occaſion of offence. Laſtly, God, moved by king *David*'s prayers and humiliation, directed him what to do to put a ſtop to the peſtilence; and he, in obedience to the divine direction, offered a ſacrifice in the place which the angel of the Lord had appointed, and ſo the plague ceaſed. God, who chaſtens men for ſin, teaches them at the ſame time how they may recover his favour, and is appeaſed towards them as ſoon as they make uſe of thoſe appointed means of reconciliation, and he ſees they are truly humbled.

CHAP. XXII.

I. THE place where *David* had offered a ſacrifice, to put an end to the plague which raged in the kingdom, having been marked out by God for the place to build the temple in, *David* makes neceſſary preparations for the work, and gets together the workmen and the materials for the building. II. He charges his ſon *Solomon* to labour in the work, and to fear God; and exhorts the chief of the people to aſſiſt his ſon in that great deſign.

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REFLECTIONS.

KING *David* gave noble proofs of his piety towards the end of his reign. For not content with ſerving God by calling upon him, and giving thanks for his mercies in his own life, he was deſirous they ſhould build a temple to his honour; and conſecrate all the riches and materials he could get together, for the execution of his pious deſign. But *David*'s zeal and religion is diſcovered particularly in his exhortations to his ſon *Solomon*, charging him to fear God, to keep his commandments, and to govern his people righteouſly; aſſuring him that this would be the foundation of all his happineſs. All Chriſtians, and in particular thoſe who are in authority, or who have riches, ought to have at heart the ſupport of religion and the ſervice of God. Parents eſpecially, ſhould recommend to their children piety, and the keeping God's commandments, as the whole happineſs of their families. There is a particular reflection to be made on God's not approving of *David*'s building the temple at *Jeruſalem*, becauſe he had been a man of war, and had ſhed much blood, and therefore God was pleaſed this deſign ſhould be rather executed by his ſon *Solomon*. From whence we may conclude that God, who is a God of peace, does not delight in blood; that even juſt and neceſſary wars are a great evil; and that by peace and tranquillity, rather than by confuſion and trouble, his kingdom is promoted and advanced.

CHAP. XXIII.

DAVID aſſembles the prieſts and Levites; numbers the Levites, and aſſigns them their ſeveral functions.

REFLECTIONS.

DAVID having numbered the Levites, they were found to be thirty eight thouſand; of which four and twenty thouſand were employed in the temple; ſix thouſand were judges and officers; four thouſand were porters; and four thouſand were ſingers. Till that time, the office of the Levites had been to carry the tabernacle, and the veſſels, and the ſacred utenſils, when the tabernacle was taken to pieces, and carried from one place to another. But as this office was going to ceaſe, when the temple was to be built, other functions were aſſigned them; and the greateſt part of them were appointed to ſerve under the prieſts in the temple; however, they did not ſerve all at once, but in their turn. What *David* did on this occaſion ſhews the wiſdom of this prince, and his zeal in the ſervice of God.

CHAP. XXIV.

THIS chapter contains a liſt of the prieſts, who deſcended from *Aaron*, by his two ſons, *Eleazar* and *Ithamar*. They were divided into four and twenty claſſes, to ſerve in their order. Afterwards, the families of the Levites were in like manner divided into four and twenty claſſes, to be joined to the prieſts in the ſervice of the temple.

CHAP. XXV.

THIS chapter treats of the ſingers, in number two hundred and eighty eight, who praiſed God in the temple with ſinging, and with ſacred inſtruments of muſic. Theſe likewiſe were diſtributed into four and twenty claſſes, twelve in each claſs; ſo that there were always twelve ſingers officiating.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVI.

THE diviſions and offices of thoſe Levites who were porters and keepers of the temple. Theſe ſerved by turns, as the others did; and were placed at the four avenues of the temple. A part of theſe Levites were keepers of the ſacred treaſures; others were appointed for religious and civil affairs.

REFLECTIONS *on chap.* XXIV, XXV, *and* XXVI.

THE general reflection on theſe chapters, is, that *David* in his great zeal ſettled every thing relating to religion and the ſervice of God, in a beautiful order; that ſo every thing might be performed in a proper manner, and agreeable to the divine will. However, this prince did not regulate all theſe things by his own authority; but herein followed the directions God gave by the prophets *Gad*, *Nathan*, and *Samuel*.

CHAP. XXVII.

THIS chapter contains the number and the courſes of the military and civil officers.

REFLECTIONS.

IT appears from this chapter, that king *David* had in his ſervice two hundred fourſcore and eight thouſand men; who were divided into twelve regiments of twenty-four thouſand men, and who ſerved each in their month. By this means, the ſervice was a burden to none; ſince after they had attended their month, the officers and the ſoldiers were at liberty for eleven months to take care of their domeſtick affairs. We have likewiſe in this chapter the names

names and posts of the heads of the twelve tribes, and the principal officers of the king's household. There was one set over the king's treasures in the city; another appointed for the storehouses in the country; another had the inspection of those that tilled the ground; others were for the vineyards and for the wine; another for the fig-trees and olive-trees. There was one set over the cattle in the mountains; and another in the vallies; another had the inspection of the camels and she-asses; another had the direction of the small cattle; and lastly, there was a governor over the king's sons. Thus *David*, as a wise and prudent prince, and a father of his country, provided for the security and defence of his dominions, without burdening his subjects.

CHAP. XXVIII.

I. *DAVID* informs the heads of the people of the design he had formed to build a temple, and how God had let him know that *Solomon* his son should build it. II. He exhorts them, as well as *Solomon*, to set about this work, and gives *Solomon* a plan of the temple, with a great quantity of gold, silver and materials, which he had got together for this purpose.

REFLECTIONS.

WE still see *David*'s great zeal for the service of God, the care he took before his death, to give both the rulers of the kingdom, and *Solomon* his son, necessary instructions for the building of the temple; and how he provided gold, silver, materials, and every thing he could get together for the execution of this pious design. Let us all be animated with the same zeal, and contribute, according

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ing to our ſtation and abilities, to the promoting and eſtabliſhing God's worſhip and ſervice; and if the nature of that worſhip which the Goſpel teaches us to pay to God does not require ſuch great expence, we may employ our ſubſtance in works of piety, ſtill more acceptable in the ſight of God; in procuring the edification and inſtruction of our neighbour, in relieving thoſe that are in neceſſity, and labouring by all poſſible means, and eſpecially by our examples, to promote and advance the kingdom of *Jeſus Chriſt*. *David*'s exhortations to the chief men of the kingdom, and to *Solomon* his ſon, charging them above all things to ſerve God with integrity and uprightneſs of heart, and to keep his commandments, deſerve to be well conſidered. The firſt and moſt important of all duties is to fear God, to be zealous for his glory, and to adhere firmly to his holy laws; on this depends the happineſs of nations, and of every individual; as *David* repreſents to *Solomon* in theſe words: *The Lord ſearcheth the hearts, and underſtandeth all imaginations of the thoughts: if thou ſeek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off for ever.*

CHAP. XXIX.

THIS chapter contains three things; I. A particular account of the offerings and contributions which *David* and the rulers of the people made for the temple. II. *David*'s praiſe and thankſgiving to God, when he preſented theſe offerings to the Lord. III. *Solomon* is made king, and *David* dies, after he had reigned forty years.

REFLECTIONS.

THE readineſs and devotion with which *David*, and the chief of the people, offered ſo liberally towards the building of the temple, ſhould excite

excite us to expreſs our good will upon all occaſions wherein God and his worſhip are concerned. And as *David* was the firſt who gave marks of his zeal on this occaſion, and the chief of the people followed his example, ſo the rich and great ſhould diſtinguiſh themſelves whenever thay have it in their power to do any thing for God; and every one ſhould eſteem it their happineſs, as well as their duty, to forward the deſign of thoſe who deſire to promote the intereſts of religion. But the piety of *David* ſhines forth with the greateſt luſtre in the prayer he made upon this occaſion. Herein he acknowledges and adores the majeſty of God; with great humility preſents his offering before him, and the offerings of the chief of the people; offers up ardent prayers for all the people, and for *Solomon* his ſon; and exhorts the whole congregation of *Iſrael* to join with him in bleſſing and praiſing God. The humble and ardent devotion, and the extraordinary ſpirit which is diffuſed through every part of this excellent prayer, ſhould wonderfully animate us to the ſame duties. Let us then diſcharge theſe duties with pleaſure and a holy zeal: let us adore and praiſe the infinite power and majeſty of God: let us with profound humility acknowledge, that we are in his ſight but frail mortal creatures; that all we have comes from him; and that whatever we offer or do for his glory, we do but offer him his own, and what he had firſt given us. Let us beſeech him to produce in us good diſpoſitions, and ever keep them up in us, and to turn our hearts and thoughts towards him; let us excite our neighbours to join their praiſes with ours; and let us continually animate one another to bleſs and glorify his holy name, by our prayers and praiſes, and by our obedience, and a ſteady application to his ſervice. Laſtly, we here ſee that *Solomon* was made king in his father

ther *David*'s life-time; and by that means *David* had the comfort to ſee before his death the promiſes fulfilled, which God had made of giving him a ſon, whoſe reign ſhould be glorious. Thus ended the life of *David*, whoſe hiſtory is ſo fully recorded by the ſacred writers, in which we meet with ſo many remarkable events, and various examples, both of virtue and of vice, which we ſhould improve to our inſtruction and ſanctification.

The end of the Firſt Book of CHRONICLES.

THE SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES.

ARGUMENT.

This Book contains the hiſtory of the kings that reigned at Jeruſalem, *from* Solomon, *the ſon of* David, *to the time of the* Babyloniſh *captivity. In this Book we find ſeveral hiſtories which are recorded in the Books of* Kings, *but with this difference, that this Book, properly ſpeaking, treats only of the reign of of the kings of* Judah; *and when the kings of* Iſrael *are mentioned, it is only occaſionally; whereas the Books of* Kings *include the hiſtory both of the kings of* Iſrael *and* Judah.

CHAP. I.

I. KING *Solomon* being ſettled on the throne, goes to *Gibeon*, there to offer a ſolemn ſacrifice. II. While he is there, God appears to him, and promiſes to give him whatever he ſhould aſk; and this prince, having begged of God wiſdom rather than riches, he granted him both theſe bleſſings. III. At the end of the chapter, we have a brief deſcription of the power and riches of *Solomon*.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

SOLOMON, from the beginning of his reign, gave proofs of his affection for religion, and of his zeal in going to *Gibeon*, where the tabernacle then was, to worſhip God there, to give him thanks, and to implore his bleſſing. But his piety appeared chiefly, when God permitted him to aſk what he pleaſed, and he requeſted of him that knowledge and wiſdom which was requiſite to enable him to govern his people righteouſly: which requeſt was ſo pleaſing to God, that he not only granted him an extraordinary degree of wiſdom, which made him ſuperior to all other kings, but gave him withal the riches, power, and glory, which he had not deſired. This hiſtory teaches kings and princes, that in the exalted ſtation they are in, there is nothing they ſtand more in need of than wiſdom and righteouſneſs; that the way to obtain this bleſſing, is to aſk it of God; and that this will ſecure the divine favour to themſelves and their ſubjects, and make them proſper. And let every one of us learn from hence to prefer true wiſdom, and the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, before earthly advantages. God, who heard the prayers of *Solomon*, never refuſes real bleſſings to thoſe who deſire to receive them, and who aſk them of him; and beſides this, he often grants them temporal proſperity, which they do not aſk.

CHAP. II.

I. SOLOMON ſends ambaſſadors to *Hiram*, king of *Tyre*, and deſires him to ſupply him with workmen and materials for the building of the temple of *Jeruſalem*. II. *Hiram* congratulates *Solomon* upon his acceſſion to the throne, and grants his requeſt.

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REFLECTIONS.

THE deſign which *Solomon* formed of building the temple, and his engagements with the king of *Tyre* on this account, lead us to conſider, that nothing is more worthy of princes, who have the happineſs to know God, than to labour in the promoting true religion and the worſhip of God; and that this is the beſt uſe they can make of their power and riches. There are two reflections to be made upon *Hiram*'s reply to *Solomon*: one is, that the king of *Tyre* had ſome knowledge of the true God, which appears from his bleſſing the Lord who made heaven and earth, that *Solomon* had ſucceeded his father *David*: the other is, that *Hiram* furniſhed *Solomon* with materials and workmen, as he deſired. God uſually bleſſes the undertakings of thoſe who aim at the promoting his glory, and gives them good ſucceſs.

CHAP. III, IV.

THE third chapter deſcribes the temple which *Solomon* built, its dimenſions, the moſt holy place, the cherubims, the hangings, and the pillars at the entrance of the temple; and the fourth chapter contains a deſcription of the altar of burnt-offerings, the great veſſel, called the molten or brazen ſea, the lavers, the candleſticks, the tables, the courts, and the other works which were made for the temple, both by *Solomon* and by *Hiram*.

REFLECTIONS *on chapters* iii. *and* iv.

ON theſe two chapters let it be remarked, that king *Solomon*, when he built the temple, had it made, as to its principal parts, after the method of the ancient tabernacle, which was ſet up in the wilderneſs, in the time of *Moſes*, and conformed to

the directions given by God. But he added to it many rich ornaments, and ſpared nothing which might render the temple the moſt magnificent building he poſſibly could make. Though what *Solomon* did upon this occaſion was acceptable to God, becauſe he did it out of zeal for his worſhip, we muſt remember, that this magnificence was not what God chiefly required, even then, and much leſs what he principally requires of Chriſtians: all that he has ordained, with reſpect to the externals of religion, is that we obſerve the rules he has laid down, and take care that *all things be done decently, and in order:* otherwiſe the Goſpel-worſhip is internal and ſpiritual; and if Chriſtians are not required to apply their riches to ſupport any pompous ceremonies in religion, they ought to employ them in works truly good and holy, for this God has very expreſsly required of them.

CHAP. V.

SOLOMON begins the building of the temple, in the fourth year of his reign; and the building being completed in ſeven years, he orders the ark, and the ſacred veſſels, which were at *Jeruſalem* in the tabernacle, to be brought into the temple; upon which occaſion they offer ſacrifices, and God gives tokens of his preſence, a cloud filling the temple.

REFLECTIONS.

AS the ark of the covenant was the moſt expreſs and moſt precious pledge of God's preſence among his people, it was expedient it ſhould be placed in the temple which *Solomon* had built. For this reaſon he had it removed thither, with all the ſacred veſſels which had been till then in the tabernacle, which *David* his father had ſet up; and as he was deſirous the ark ſhould be removed in a religious

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and ſolemn manner, it was attended with ſacrifices, and they praiſed God with ſongs, and ſacred inſtruments of muſic. What paſſed on this occaſion is a proof of *Solomon*'s zeal and piety, and an argument that nothing ſhould more ſenſibly affect us, nor give us greater joy, than what tends to the glory of God, and procures us the divine protection, and the effects of his love. We find by this hiſtory, that what is done with a view to God's glory, is always acceptable in his ſight; ſince after the ark was brought into the moſt holy place, God gave proofs of his preſence by the cloud which filled the temple, and convinced the *Iſraelites*, that the Lord would, for the future, dwell there.

CHAP. VI.

KING *Solomon* dedicates the temple of *Jeruſalem* by a prayer, in which, after he had firſt bleſſed God for having happily executed his deſign of building the temple, he beſeeches him to hear thoſe prayers, which ſhould be offered up to him in that place; and to let that houſe be always attended with the tokens of his preſence and favour.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt thing we take notice of in this prayer, which *Solomon* made at the dedication of the temple, is his lively and grateful ſenſe of God's favour, in fulfilling the promiſes made to his father *David*. Beſides, from this prayer, which is full of noble and exalted ſentiments of piety and religion, it appears, that *Solomon* knew that God is every where preſent, and that his glory filleth heaven and earth; and therefore he did not imagine that God was to be confined to that houſe which was then dedicated to him. We further learn here, that though *Solomon* had been at a vaſt expence in building the tem-

ple, and divine ſervice was performed in it with great pomp, he never thought that this magnificence could be in itſelf acceptable to God, any more than a worſhip merely external. But he looked upon the temple as a place principally ſet apart for prayer, where the *Iſraelites* were to come and offer their ſupplications to the Lord in their ſeveral neceſſities; and particularly, in thoſe miſeries and calamities which God ſhould viſit them with, to puniſh them for their ſins. This teaches us, that calling upon the name of the Lord is the moſt important part of his worſhip, and that we ought to have recourſe to prayer in all our afflictions, and in all our neceſſities. Laſtly, What *Solomon* ſaid on this ſolemn occaſion teaches us, that God hears from heaven the prayers of thoſe who apply to him in their neceſſities, provided they do it with a humble and ſincere confeſſion of their ſins, and are truly diſpoſed to amend their lives.

CHAP. VII.

I. *SOLOMON* having ended his prayer, God again gave tokens of his preſence, by the fire which fell from heaven upon the ſacrifices, and by the cloud which filled the temple. After the feaſt of dedication, they kept the feaſt of tabernacles. II. God appeared again to *Solomon*, promiſing to dwell in the temple, and to eſtabliſh his kingdom, if he and his people were obedient unto him; and threatning, on the contrary, to deſtroy the *Iſraelites*, and the temple itſelf, if they forſook his worſhip.

REFLECTIONS.

UPON the former part of this chapter let it be obſerved, that though there is now no place where God dwells, as he formerly did in the temple of *Jeruſalem*, or gives proofs of his preſence in a ſenſible

ſible and miraculous manner, as he did at the dedication of this temple, yet we ought to believe he is preſent wherever men call upon him in truth and ſincerity; and that the prayers which are offered up in our religious aſſemblies, are very acceptable unto him; as our Lord aſſures us in theſe words, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midſt of them.* We find in the ſecond part of this chapter, that God appeared to *Solomon* a ſecond time; that he renewed his former promiſes of protecting both the city and temple of *Jeruſalem*, and his family and ſubjects, if he and his people continued faithful; but that he threatened at the ſame time to reject them, and withdraw his protection from that place, which had been dedicated to him, if they fell into diſobedience and idolatry. All this tended to confirm *Solomon* in the good thoughts he then entertained; for God fails not to make uſe of the moſt likely means to engage men to fear him. To this end, he employs promiſes and threatnings, and puts them both in execution; infallibly bleſſing thoſe who keep his commandments, and forſaking thoſe who rebel againſt him. This the *Jews* experienced when God delivered them to their enemies; and the magnificent temple which *Solomon* had built, and dedicated in ſo devout and ſolemn a manner, was taken and burnt by the *Chaldeans*, about four hundred and twenty years after.

CHAP. VIII.

SOLOMON builds cities and forts, makes ſeveral nations tributary, gives poſts and employments to the *Iſraelites* his ſubjects, brings his queen to the palace he had built for her, offers to God ſolemn ſacrifices, obſerves the order which *David* his

father had appointed for the divine ſervice, and fits out a fleet to go for gold to *Ophir*.

REFLECTIONS.

AFTER *Solomon* had dedicated the temple, he provided for the happineſs and ſecurity of his ſubjects, and of his realm; he took care likewiſe to have divine ſervice performed in a decent and regular manner, and as God had commanded. Kings who have the honour to know God, ſhould thus labour to promote the happineſs of their people, and above all, to make religion flouriſh. Princes who thus behave, God never fails to bleſs. *Solomon*'s good deſigns he bleſſed with ſucceſs; he ſtrengthened and enlarged his dominions, by bringing neighbouring nations into ſubjection to him, and increaſing his riches and revenues.

CHAP. IX.

IN this chapter we have, I. An account of the arrival of the queen of *Sheba*. II. A deſcription of *Solomon*'s riches. III. Mention of his death.

REFLECTIONS.

THE arrival of the queen of *Sheba*, who by the report of *Solomon*'s ſplendor and wiſdom was induced to take a journey to *Jeruſalem*, ſhews that the reputation of that prince was exceeding great, and her coming ſerved to make it ſtill greater; which muſt convince *Solomon* of the truth of the promiſes God had made him. It is remarkable too, that this queen bleſſed God for ſetting *Solomon* upon the throne, and acknowledged that God, in mercy to his people *Iſrael*, had given them this prince: ſo that this arrival of the queen of *Sheba* might ſerve to give her and her people ſome knowledge of the true God.

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But the principal reflection which Chriſtians are to make on this hiſtory, is that mentioned by our Lord in the goſpel; when ſpeaking of thoſe who had heard the preaching of the goſpel, and ſeen his miracles, he ſays, *The queen of the ſouth ſhall riſe up in judgment with this generation, and ſhall condemn it: for ſhe came from the utmoſt parts of the earth to hear the wiſdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon is here.* Laſtly, It appears from this chapter that God, according to his promiſes, granted *Solomon*, together with that extraordinary wiſdom which was ſo much admired in him, riches likewiſe, and power, which diſtinguiſhed him from all the neighbouring princes. This ſhould have engaged him to expreſs his gratitude all his life, for the privileges God had granted him; but after ſome time he abuſed them; his riches corrupted him and his ſubjects, and proved the occaſion of expoſing him and them to the judgments God had threatned them with. Peace and plenty are generally fatal to men, and their ingratitude towards God cauſes him to deprive them of theſe bleſſings, and ſeverely puniſh them.

CHAP. X.

SOLOMON being dead, and *Rehoboam* his ſon ſucceeding him, ten tribes revolt from him, and make *Jeroboam* king.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter informs us, that of the twelve tribes of *Iſrael*, which *Solomon* and *David* had reigned over, ten revolted from *Rehoboam* the ſon of *Solomon*, ſo that two only remained ſubject to the deſcendants of *David*, and the other ten made *Jeroboam* king over them, and formed a ſeparate kingdom. This was a remarkable event, and from the account

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we have of it in this chapter, we may conclude, that this revolution was owing to the evil advice of *Rehoboam*'s young counſellors, who perſuaded him to treat the people with rigour and ſeverity, when they deſired to be eaſed of part of their burden. By this we ſee, that violent and raſh counſels, ſuch as uſually come from perſons who want age and experience, are fatal to thoſe who follow them, and may even expoſe ſtates to great evils. But what is principally to be conſidered, was the puniſhment of *Solomon*'s idolatry and other ſins, which were continued under his ſon *Rehoboam*. The ſacred hiſtory remarks, that all this was conducted by Providence, *that the Lord might perform his word, which he ſpake by the hand of Ahijah*, who had foretold that the ten tribes ſhould be ſeparated from the kingdom of *Iſrael*, and that *Jeroboam* ſhould reign over them. This prediction was not long before it was fulfilled; God by this means puniſhed the deſcendants of *David*, and all the people, for their ſins; and their perſeverance in theſe ſins occaſioned, in the end, the utter deſtruction both of the kingdom of *Judah* and *Iſrael*.

CHAP. XI.

I. *REHOBOAM*, intending to make war upon the ten tribes that had rebelled againſt him, is diverted from his deſign by a prophet of the Lord forbidding him to put it in execution. II. He provides for the ſecurity of his kingdom, and builds ſeveral forts. III. The prieſts and Levites who were in the kingdom of the ten tribes, withdrew to *Rehoboam* at *Jeruſalem*, with ſeveral other perſons, becauſe of the idolatry which *Jeroboam* had introduced. IV. *Rehoboam* takes ſeveral wives, and has a great number of children born to him.

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REFLECTIONS.

GOD would not ſuffer *Rehoboam* to make war upon the revolted tribes, not only becauſe it was his will that thoſe tribes ſhould remain ſeparate from *Judah*, and make a diſtinct kingdom; but alſo, becauſe the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes were brethren to the men of *Judah*. From whence we may conclude, that when God thinks fit to correct us, by certain events which he permits, it is our duty to acquieſce; that we ought to avoid making war upon thoſe with whom we are united by the ties of nature, and eſpecially by thoſe of religion; which would be ſtill more criminal in Chriſtians, than it would have been in the *Jews*. What next deſerves our attention in this chapter, is *Jeroboam*'s driving the prieſts and Levites out of his kingdom, becauſe they would not ſubmit to the idolatry which he had ſet up; wherein he gave a freſh proof of his impiety and ingratitude towards God, who had ſet him on the throne. The Lord's miniſters gave at this time a noble example of zeal and reſolution; ſince they choſe rather to leave their houſes and poſſeſſions, than to remain in a country where idolatry was publicly practiſed; and a great number of *Iſraelites* followed their example, and came to *Jeruſalem* with them. We ſhould always leave the place where we are not at liberty to ſerve God with purity, and ſhould prefer the advantage of ſerving him before all the conveniencies of life. But the miniſters of religion, in particular, ſhould be firſt in the diſcharge of this duty, and ſhould upon all occaſions expreſs their zeal and inviolable attachment to the glory of God, and his worſhip. Beſides this, the retreat of the prieſts, Levites, and many of the *Iſraelites*, who left their dwellings, ſerved to confirm the kingdom in the hands of *Rehoboam*; and this ſhould have engaged him

him to continue the exerciſe of the true religion in its purity; but this ungrateful prince, at the end of three years, forſook the Lord, and fell into idolatry. His impiety appeared likewiſe in his taking ſo great a number of wives, which God in the law had forbid the kings of his people to do; and which alſo drew upon him and his people the judgments of the Almighty.

CHAP. XII.

I. *REHOBOAM* and his ſubjects falling into idolatry and many other ſins, God, to puniſh them, ſent againſt them *Shiſhak*, king of *Egypt*, who took ſeveral cities of *Judah*. II. But *Rehoboam*, and the rulers of the people, humbling themſelves upon the remonſtrances of the prophet *Shemaiah*, God did not ſuffer *Shiſhak* to deſtroy them, and that king retreated, after he had taken the treaſures of the temple, and of the king's houſe. III. *Rehoboam* dies when he had reigned ſeventeen years, and *Abijah* his ſon ſucceeded him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THOUGH God had puniſhed *Rehoboam* by the revolt of the ten tribes, this prince forſook God as ſoon as he found himſelf ſettled in his kingdom; he introduced idolatry and abominations of every kind, and thereby expoſed himſelf to the wrath of God. When men improve neither by the corrections of the Almighty, nor by his forbearance and long ſuffering, they bring upon themſelves freſh misfortunes, as it happened to *Rehoboam* and his ſubjects, who were attacked by the king of *Egypt* and his allies. II. *Rehoboam*, and the chief men of his kingdom, being ſeverely threatned, humbled themſelves, upon the remonſtrances of the prophet *Shemaiah*;

maiah; and on this account, and becauſe, as is obſerved in this chapter, there were ſtill ſome remains of piety and religion in the kingdom of *Judah*, God ſpared them, and ſuffered not the king of *Egypt* to deſtroy *Jeruſalem*. It is but right, that thoſe who have offended God ſhould humble themſelves; and that great men in particular, who uſually provoke God's wrath, ſhould be the firſt in endeavouring to appeaſe it. The humiliation of ſinners, and the piety of good men, avert the divine judgments, and deliver kingdoms. However, God, to puniſh *Rehoboam*, ſuffered *Shiſhak* to carry away the moſt precious things which king *Solomon* had put in the temple, and in his palace. This was a plain intimation to *Rehoboam* and his ſubjects, that if they continued to offend God, he would forſake them, and at length deliver into the hands of idolators *Jeruſalem*, and the temple which *Solomon* had built. Further, we here ſee a great inſtance of the inſtability of human affairs. *Solomon* had left *Rehoboam* his ſon immenſe riches, and treaſuries full of gold and ſilver; and *Rehoboam* did not long poſſeſs them, but ſaw himſelf ſtripped of all, as he had been five years before of the greateſt part of his dominions, by the revolt of the ten tribes. Laſtly, It muſt be remarked, that though *Rehoboam* had humbled himſelf, yet he put not away idolatry, which continued likewiſe in the reign of his ſon *Abijah*. The repentance of ſinners is not always of long continuance, and they often relapſe into their former hardneſs of heart, as ſoon as God gives them a little reſt.

CHAP. XIII.

THE hiſtory of *Abijah*, ſon of *Rehoboam*, and ſecond king of *Judah*. He made war upon *Jeroboam* king of *Iſrael*; and when he had reproached

proached him and his ſubjects for rebelling againſt the houſe of *David*, and forſaking the worſhip of God, by the divine aſſiſtance he overcame him: but after he had reigned three years, the Lord ſmote him that he died.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is to be remarked on this chapter, I. That *Abijah*, when at war with *Jeroboam* king of *Iſrael*, reproached him and the ten tribes for making idols, and forſaking the worſhip and law of God, and even himſelf expreſſed great confidence in his aſſiſtance. His reproaches were juſt and well grounded; yet *Abijah* himſelf was an impious prince, and though he boaſted as if he and his ſubjects had preſerved the worſhip of God pure and uncorrupt, he was himſelf alſo an idolator. Thus wicked men diſcover a zeal for God and religion when it ſuits their intereſt, and condemn others while they themſelves are highly guilty. Nevertheleſs, becauſe *Abijah* was of the family of *David*, and there were in his kingdom many who feared God, and truſted in him, this prince conquered *Jeroboam*. II. It muſt be obſerved, that God, who would not ſuffer *Rehoboam* ſome years before to make war upon *Jeroboam*, becauſe he would have the kingdom of the ten tribes remain diſtinct from that of *Judah*, and becauſe idolatry was not then eſtabliſhed, hindered not *Abijah* from making war upon the ſame prince, and granted him a ſignal victory, a great number of the *Iſraelites* being defeated. God thought fit, by this means, to puniſh *Jeroboam*, to humble his ſubjects, and to convince them that the idolatry which reigned among them was odious in the ſight of God; and that the true ſervice of God and his covenant were to be found only in the kingdom of *Judah*. If God therefore gave *Abijah* good ſucceſs, he did it

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for the glory of his name, and the benefit of his people. Thus does God ſometimes ſuffer even the enterpriſes of the wicked to proſper, when they are good in themſelves, or may tend to promote his glory.

CHAP. XIV.

I. ABIJAH, the ſecond king of *Judah*, being dead, was ſucceeded by *Aſa* his ſon, a king that feared God, put down idolatry, and reſtored the worſhip of God. II. *Aſa* governed with much wiſdom and courage; and when the *Ethiopians*, with a numerous army, came to make war againſt him, he implored the divine aſſiſtance, and defeated them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS chapter ſets before us the piety of king *Aſa*, and the manner in which God rewarded him. *Aſa* gave ſignal proofs of his piety in deſtroying throughout his kingdom the altars of the falſe gods and the idols, which had been introduced under the reign of *Solomon*, and continued under *Rehoboam* and *Abijah* his predeceſſors. This excellent example ſhould excite princes not to ſuffer iniquity to prevail in their dominions, and to cauſe religion and good manners to flouriſh and abound. II. God bleſſed *Aſa*, ſtrengthened him in his kingdom, and granted him reſt and peace. It is true, *Aſa* was attacked by the *Ethiopians*, who came againſt him with a formidable army; but calling upon the Lord with profound humility, and ſure truſt and confidence, he put the *Ethiopians* to flight. God thus bleſſes and protects religious princes, and in general, all thoſe who are truly zealous for his glory, and fear before him; and if he ſuffers them

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to be expoſed to great dangers, he diſplays his power in their behalf, and delivers them.

CHAP. XV.

I. THE prophet *Azariah* exhorts *Aſa*, the third king of *Judah*, to complete the work which he had begun, and utterly deſtroy idolatry. II. This prince, moved by the remonſtrances of the prophet, renews his covenant with God, and makes all the people ſwear to the covenant. III. He breaks in pieces an idol, which *Maachah* his mother had made and worſhipped; and replaces in the temple thoſe things which were conſecrated to God. Wherefore the Lord continued to bleſs him, and made him enjoy a laſting peace.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter informs us, that *Aſa*, encouraged by the ſignal victory he had lately gained over the *Ethiopians*, and animated by the exhortations of the prophet *Azariah*, applied himſelf again with great zeal to reſtore the ſervice of God to its purity. He required all the people to renew their covenant with God by a ſolemn oath, which was done with great demonſtrations of joy; in conformity to the law of God, he ordered all thoſe who worſhipped idols to be put to death: He even deprived his mother of all authority, becauſe ſhe was an idolator. All theſe marks of piety in *Aſa* were ſo acceptable in the ſight of God, that he granted him and his ſubjects great happineſs and a laſting peace. The chief care of princes and their people, ſhould be to render God propitious, by a ſincere affection for religion, and a firm attachment to his laws; for by that alone can they gain ſtrength againſt their enemies, and ſecure their own happineſs; as the prophet

phet *Azariah* repreſented to king *Aſa* and his people; ſaying, *The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if you ſeek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forſake him, he will forſake you.* However, it muſt be obſerved, that when it is ſaid in this chapter that the heart of *Aſa* was perfect all his days, it is meant only, that he always adhered to the true ſervice of God, and never fell into idolatry; for in other reſpects he fell into great ſins towards the end of his life, as we ſee in the following chapter.

CHAP. XVI.

I. *ASA*, king of *Juda*, being attacked by *Baaſha*, king of *Iſrael*, calls in the aſſiſtance of *Benhadad*, king of *Syria*. II. The prophet *Hanani* reproves him for it, and blames him for not truſting in God alone, who had aſſiſted him in his war with the *Ethiopians*. III. *Aſa*, provoked at theſe reproaches, put the prophet in priſon, and at the ſame time oppreſſed ſome of the people. IV. Some time after he fell ſick, and had recourſe to phyſicians rather than to God: he died in the one and fortieth year of his reign, and *Jehoſhaphat* his ſon reigned after him.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are chiefly to take notice in this chapter, that *Aſa*, who had a long time behaved with piety, forgot himſelf in the latter part of his reign. When he was attacked by *Baaſha*, king of *Iſrael*, inſtead of putting his truſt in God, whoſe aſſiſtance he had experienced when the *Ethiopians* made war againſt him, he ſeeks for ſuccour from *Benhadad*, king of *Syria*; he even ſolicits him, and prevails upon him by money to break his league with *Baaſha*, king of *Iſrael*; which was a breach of faith, and

an unjuſt action. He was very angry with the prophet *Hanani*, and put him in priſon, for reproving him; he begun to oppreſs his ſubjects; and when he fell ſick, he had recourſe only to phyſicians, and turned not unto the Lord. Thus king *Aſa* ended his days in a train of actions, which but badly ſuited with his former behaviour, and ſhew that his heart was turned away from God. This change in *Aſa* ſhews that it is of no conſequence to have begun well, and to have done our duty for ſome time, if we do not perſevere; this is a warning to thoſe who have piety, to be upon their guard, leſt by growing remiſs and careleſs, they deprive themſelves of the divine protection, and the effects of God's love; ſince God grants and continues his favours only to thoſe who ſerve him with an upright and ſincere heart; as the prophet *Hanani* teaches us, in theſe beautiful expreſſions; *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in behalf of them whoſe heart is perfect towards him.*

CHAP. XVII.

THE hiſtory of *Jehoſhaphat*, the fourth king of *Judah*, begins here. He was a good prince; he deſtroyed idolatry, and diſperſed Levites throughout the kingdom, to inſtruct the people in the law of God. The Lord bleſſed him for his piety, ſo that he became exceeding powerful.

REFLECTIONS.

THE life of the pious king *Jehoſhaphat* deſerves to be well conſidered. This prince was acceptable to God from the beginning of his reign. He imitated every thing that was laudable in the life of his father *Aſa*; he even took away, in many parts of his kingdom, the high places, where idolatry

latry was ſtill practiſed, and diſperſed Levites throughout the land, to inſtruct his ſubjects in the law, and teach them the fear of God; for which reaſon God bleſſed him, and raiſed him to great power, which made him formidable to all his neighbours. Chriſtian kings and magiſtrates are not leſs obliged to be zealous in promoting the glory of God, and above all, to take care to have their people inſtructed in religion by faithful and good paſtors. This procures the divine protection upon thoſe who govern, and upon the ſtates which they are ſet over, and makes them proſper.

CHAP. XVIII.

I. KING *Jehoſhaphat* enters into an alliance with *Ahab*, king of *Iſrael*, marrying his ſon *Joram* to the daughter of *Ahab*. II. He afterwards joined *Ahab* in making war upon the *Syrians*; but deſired firſt to know the will of the Lord, which was declared by the prophet *Micaiah*; who, contrary to the opinion of the four hundred falſe prophets, told them, that God would not bleſs the undertaking. III. *Ahab*, provoked with *Micaiah*, put him in priſon, and gave the king of *Syria* battle; but was killed in the engagement, and *Jehoſhaphat* too narrowly eſcaped with his life.

REFLECTIONS.

I. *JEHOSHAPHAT* was guilty of a great crime, in ſuffering his ſon *Joram* to marry *Athaliah* the daughter of *Ahab*, who was a wicked and idolatrous prince; and by going with him to war againſt the *Syrians*. The many evils which *Athaliah* did afterwards, and the ill ſucceſs of the war, ſhew, that it is always a dangerous thing to aſſociate with wicked men; and that, in particular, pious

kings ought not to be united with impious and idolatrous princes. II. However, *Jehoſhaphat* ſhewed his piety, in making them conſult a prophet of the Lord, before they went to fight againſt the *Syrians*; but he ſinned again in not following the directions of the prophet *Micaiah*, and in going to this war. Before we undertake any thing, we ſhould conſult the Lord, and examine whether what we deſign to do is agreeable to his will; and when his will is known, we ſhould follow it. Many hear the voice of God, and of his miniſters, and know his will; but when it is contrary to their wiſhes, and what they are bent upon, they pay no regard to it. III. King *Ahab* hated *Micaiah*, becauſe that prophet told him diſagreeable truths, and propheſied evil concerning him; he even put him in priſon, and confided more in his own prophets, who promiſed him victory, than in what *Micaiah* declared to him. It is better to hearken to thoſe who ſpeak to us with ſincerity, though what they ſay be ever ſo diſagreeable, than to thoſe who flatter us: but when men are offended with the truth, and will be deceived, God leaves them to their blindneſs; as it happened to *Ahab*, whom God, on account of his obſtinacy, ſuffered to be ſeduced by falſe prophets. We muſt not, however, imagine, that God inſpired theſe prophets with a lying ſpirit, or was the cauſe of *Ahab*'s obſtinacy and incredulity. Laſtly, the event proved the truth of *Micaiah*'s prediction. *Ahab* was vanquiſhed and ſlain; *Jehoſhaphat*, who wanted courage to diſengage himſelf from *Ahab*, was very near loſing his life; but God, in his goodneſs, ſpared him. Such is uſually the end of thoſe undertakings which are contrary to the divine will; and ſuch is the fruit of contracting an intimacy with wicked men, and complying with them in prejudice of our duty.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

I. *JEHOSHAPHAT*, returning from the war with the king of *Syria*, is reproved by a prophet for making an alliance with *Ahab*, who was a wicked prince. II. *Jehoſhaphat* after this applied himſelf to make piety and juſtice reign in his dominions. To this end he appointed judges in every city, and gave them inſtructions in their duty; and commanded them to ſubmit to the prieſts and Levites in matters of religion.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is here to be obſerved, I. That God, in love to *Jehoſhaphat*, reproved him by the prophet *Jehu*, for his fault in aſſiſting *Ahab* againſt the *Syrians*. This reproof ſhews, that we cannot, without diſpleaſing God and expoſing ourſelves to his wrath, join with wicked men. II. Though *Jehoſhaphat* had ſinned in what he had done, the Lord pardoned his fault, becauſe he had found in him many good things; and eſpecially, becauſe he had laboured to deſtroy idolatry throughout his kingdom. This proceeding of the Almighty with this prince, proves, that he bears with the infirmities of thoſe who have an upright heart, and forgives them upon their true repentance. III. *Jehoſhaphat*, moved with the remonſtrances of the prophet *Jehu*, exerted himſelf in many great acts of piety and zeal. He endeavoured to make religion and juſtice flouriſh throughout the kingdom; he took care to appoint judges; and very expreſsly charged them to do their duty, as the law of God had directed. Chriſtian princes ought to be ſtill more zealous for the ſervice of God, and the exerciſe of juſtice; and judges ſhould continually attend to what is delivered in this chap-

ter, conſcientiouſly diſcharging the duties of their office, as in the preſence of God, without reſpect to perſons, and without taking any bribe. And as *Jehoſhaphat* eſtabliſhed good orders, not only in civil, but alſo in religious affairs, ordering the high prieſt to preſide and judge in things relating more immediately to God; it is evident, that good order ought to prevail in religious, as well as civil affairs. God has appointed perſons to whom he has committed the government of the church, as he has appointed others to govern the ſtate. And as the functions of God's miniſters, and thoſe of magiſtrates, were ſeparate and diſtinct among the *Jews*, they ought much leſs to be confounded among Chriſtians, ſince the duties of paſtors are all ſpiritual, and the Chriſtian church is not confined to one particular ſtate, as the *Jewiſh* church was, but is diſperſed thoughout the whole world.

CHAP. XX.

I. *JEHOSHAPHAT*, being attacked by the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, proclaims a ſolemn faſt, humbles himſelf before God, and makes his ſupplication unto him. II. God aſſures him by the prophet, that the *Moabites* ſhould be deſtroyed, which was brought to paſs in a miraculous manner. III. After this victory, *Jehoſhaphat* makes his entry into *Jeruſalem*, praiſing God. IV. He joined himſelf with *Ahaziah*, king of *Iſrael*, to ſend a fleet to *Tarſhiſh*, but their enterpriſe did not ſucceed.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this hiſtory we are to take notice, that when *Jehoſhaphat* was attacked by the *Ammonites* and *Moabites*, he had recourſe to God by a ſolemn faſt, which

which he kept with all his ſubjects, and by that excellent prayer which is here ſet down, wherein he expreſſed ſo great humility, and ſo much confidence in God. The ſame confidence he diſcovered, when he addreſſed himſelf to his army, as they were going forth againſt their enemies; and ſaid, *Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jeruſalem: Believe in the Lord your God, ſo ſhall you be eſtabliſhed; believe his prophets, ſo ſhall ye proſper.* Nor was this his confidence in vain; for a prophet aſſured him, in the name of God, that he ſhould obtain the victory in a miraculous manner, and without fighting; which accordingly came to paſs; their enemies making uſe of their weapons to deſtroy each other, while the prieſts were ſinging and praiſing the Lord: whence it evidently appeared, that the victory proceeded from God. As *Jehoſhaphat* had called upon the Lord in the time of his diſtreſs, ſo he diſcharged the duty of gratitude in a very edifying manner, rendering ſolemn thanks to God, when, in his return from the war, he entered *Jeruſalem.* From the whole we draw the three following inſtructions; I. That prayer, faſting, and humiliation, are the moſt effectual means we can have recourſe to in time of danger and neceſſity, whether public or private. II. That God delivers thoſe who call upon him, and put their truſt in him; that he is wonderful in counſel, and never wants means to ſave. III. That when God has heard our prayers, and granted our requeſts, we ought to render him our hearty and ſincere thanks and praiſe for his mercies towards us. The laſt thing to be remarked in the life of *Jehoſhaphat*, is his falling into the ſame fault he had before committed. He aſſociated himſelf with *Ahaziah*, king of *Iſrael*, of whom the ſcripture ſays, *He did very wickedly*; as he had before joined with *Ahab*, the father of *Ahaziah*. But he was puniſhed for it, as

he had been before; the prophet *Eliezer* reproved him; the fleet, which they had put to ſea, periſhed; and this enterpriſe, which the hope of gain had tempted him to, turned to his confuſion and great loſs. There is no good comes of aſſociating ourſelves with wicked men, and therefore we ought to avoid, as much as poſſible, having any communication with them.

CHAP. XXI.

JORAM, the fifth king of *Judah*, ſon of *Jehoſhaphat*, ſlays his brethren, and becomes an idolator, as *Ahab* had been; for which God puniſhed him by the revolt of the *Edomites*, and of the men of *Libnah*. II. He receives a letter from the prophet *Elijah*, denouncing the judgments of God againſt his kingdom, his family, and his own perſon. III. A little after, the *Philiſtines* and the *Arabians* pillaged the land of *Judah*, and carried away his treaſures, his wives, and his children; and after all theſe misfortunes, he fell into a tedious and incurable diſeaſe, and died in great tortures, leaving *Ahaziah* his ſon to ſucceed him, who was the ſixth king of *Judah*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections which this chapter preſents us with, regard the ſins of king *Joram*, and the puniſhment which God inflicted on him. *Joram*, the ſon of the good king *Jehoſhaphat*, was a very wicked prince. He begun his reign with the murder of his brethren; he followed the idolatry of the kings of *Iſrael*, and engaged the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, and the whole kingdom of *Judah*, in the ſame impiety. This example teaches, that parents who fear God, may ſometimes have wicked children, and that God, for the puniſhment of nations, does ſometimes

ſometimes ſet over them cruel princes without a ſenſe of religion. And as it is obſerved, that *Joram* was drawn away to idolatry by *Athaliah* his wife, who was the daughter of *Ahab*; it appears from hence, that alliances made by marriage, or otherwiſe, with men who fear not God, are attended with fatal conſequences; and that kings eſpecially cannot contract alliance with wicked and idolatrous families, without expoſing their kingdoms and their own families to the utmoſt miſeries. This truth will appear ſtill more evidently from the ſequel of this hiſtory. Though theſe ſins of *Joram* provoked the Lord to anger, yet he would not deſtroy the family of *David:* however, *Joram* did not go unpuniſhed; the *Edomites*, and the men of *Libnah*, rebelled againſt him; he received a letter from the prophet *Elijah*, in which the judgments of God were denounced againſt him; the *Philiſtines* and the *Arabians* laid waſte his country, took away his treaſures, and carried his wives and children captives; and after he had ſuffered in his kingdom, in his treaſures, and in his family, he was puniſhed in his own perſon, being ſmitten with a ſtrange diſtemper, which laſted two years, at the end of which, he died in horrid agonies, his bowels falling out; and after his death they would not bury him in the ſepulchres of the kings. All this is an evident proof, that there is a particular curſe attending cruel, unjuſt, and impious princes; that their end is ſeldom happy; that when they are dead, their memory is odious; and that, in general, wicked men are frequently in this life the objects of divine vengeance; which ſhould lead us to adore the providence of God, and make us extremely afraid to offend him.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

I. AHAZIAH, the ſon of *Joram*, reigned after him; he was the ſixth king of *Judah*, and continued the idolatry which his father had introduced. When he had reigned one year, *Jehu*, who had juſt been anointed king of *Iſrael*, ſlew him and ſeveral of the chief men of *Judah*. II. When he was dead, *Athaliah* his mother, who was the daughter of *Ahab*, and addicted to idolatry, took poſſeſſion of the kingdom, and ſlew all the princes of the ſeed royal of *Judah*, even the children of her ſon *Ahaziah*; there eſcaped but one, which was *Joaſh*, who was then but a year old, and was hid in the temple ſix years, and taken care of by his aunt, the wife of *Jehoiada* the high prieſt.

REFLECTIONS.

I. AT the beginning of this chapter we find that *Ahaziah* ſucceeded *Joram* his father, becauſe all his brethren that were elder than he had been ſlain by the hands of their enemies. This proof of God's wrath againſt the family of *Joram*, and his goodneſs to *Ahaziah* in ſparing him alive, ſhould have engaged this prince not to provoke the Lord to anger by his crimes; and amazing it is, that *Ahaziah*, after he had ſeen all the misfortunes that befel his father, and the tragical end he made, ſhould run into the very ſame errors as he. But this is a common caſe in families where there is no fear of God; the children are like their parents; and eſpecially, among princes, who too commonly give a looſe to their paſſions, and are ſurrounded with flatterers and with evil examples. II. We muſt take notice, that *Ahaziah* was ruined by following the counſels of his mother *Athaliah*, and by being allied to *Joram*, king

king of *Iſrael*. The ſcripture ſays, that the deſtruction of *Ahaziah* proceeded from God, and was owing to his coming to *Joram*. *Ahaziah* was ſlain by *Jehu*, and as he had partook in the ſins of the houſe of *Ahab*, he was likewiſe involved in the judgments which God brought upon that family by means of *Jehu*, king of *Iſrael*. Evil counſels, and the ſociety of the wicked, are the occaſion of many misfortunes. Wicked *Athaliah*'s getting poſſeſſion of the throne, and cauſing the children of her ſon *Ahaziah* to be put to death, may ſerve to ſhew, that God ſometimes ſuffers tyrants and uſurpers to exalt themſelves, and take poſſeſſion of ſtates and kingdoms, and the enterprizes of the wicked to proſper. But God ſets bounds to their wickedneſs, and does not always forſake the oppreſſed. *Joaſh*, the ſon of *Ahaziah*, was preſerved by a very extraordinary act of Providence; his aunt, the wife of *Jehoiada* the high prieſt, hid him, and took care of him ſix years; at the end of which time, *Joaſh* was proclaimed king, religion reſtored to its purity, and *Athaliah* puniſhed for all the evils ſhe had done. It is of conſequence to obſerve likewiſe in this place, that as *Joaſh* was the only perſon left of the blood royal of *Judah*, God was pleaſed he ſhould be preſerved, not only becauſe he had promiſed the poſterity of *David* ſhould ſit upon the throne, but alſo becauſe the Meſſiah was to be of his deſcendants; which could not have been had *Joaſh* been put to death, becauſe the race of *David* would have been extinct.

CHAP. XXIII.

1. JOASH, ſon of *Ahaziah*, king of *Judah*, when he had been hid ſix years, during which time *Athaliah* reigned, his uncle *Jehoiada*, the chief prieſt, cauſed him to be proclaimed king, and

Athaliah

Athaliah to be put to death. II. He renewed the covenant between God and the people; deſtroyed the worſhip of *Baal*, which *Athaliah* had introduced in the kingdom of *Judah*; and reſtored the true worſhip of God.

REFLECTIONS.

THE providence of God, and his juſtice, in a very particular manner appear in raiſing the young prince *Joaſh* to the throne, and in the puniſhment of the wicked queen *Athaliah*, who had uſurped the kingdom, who encouraged idolatry, and had ſhed ſo much blood. This happy revolution, which at the ſame time freed the kingdom of *Judah* from the oppreſſion of an impious and cruel queen, and, by reſtoring the kingdom to its lawful prince, recovered religion to its purity, ſhews, that God cannot grant a greater favour to any people, than by removing wicked princes, and placing good ones in their ſtead; and ſince *Joaſh* was ſet upon the throne by the zeal and prudence of *Jehoiada*, the high prieſt, who did an act of juſtice in reſtoring the crown to its rightful heir, we may learn, that it is a great happineſs, when princes and ſtates are conducted by the counſels of wiſe and godly men.

CHAP. XXIV.

THE hiſtory of *Joaſh*, the ſeventh king of *Judah*. He began to reign when he was ſeven years old, and adhered to his duty all the time *Jehoiada* the prieſt lived. But after his death, he became ſo corrupted that he again introduced idolatry, which, in the beginning of his reign, he had put away; and gave command to ſtone *Zechariah*, the ſon of *Jehoiada*, in the temple, becauſe that prophet reproached him for forſaking the Lord. God puniſhed

ed *Joaſh*, by delivering him into the hand of the *Syrians*; and after he had reigned forty years, his own officers conſpired againſt him and ſlew him; and *Amaziah* his ſon ſucceeded him.

REFLECTIONS.

THAT we may receive inſtruction from this hiſtory, we muſt conſider, I. That king *Joaſh* feared God, and endeavoured to promote his ſervice during the life of *Jehoiada* the prieſt; but that after his death, he corrupted his ways; and giving ear to evil counſels, both he, and the chief of the people, forſook the worſhip of the God of their fathers, to ſerve falſe gods. This great change in *Joaſh* ſhews, of how much importance it is, for great men to have about them wiſe and virtuous perſons, and for the miniſters of religion to be endued with zeal and prudence. The death of perſons of this character, is a great loſs; and evil counſels are very fatal to thoſe who follow them. God, in his great goodneſs, ſeeing *Joaſh* thus erring from the right way, ſent prophets to warn him of his ſin and his danger; but he deſpiſed their warnings, and even ſtoned the prophet *Zechariah* in the temple, becauſe he reproved him for his faults. This is an inſtance of extreme impiety in *Joaſh*, and of the baſeſt ingratitude; ſince *Zechariah* was his couſin, the ſon of his father's ſiſter, and of *Jehoiada* the prieſt, to whom *Joaſh* was beholden both for the crown and his life. Perſons who once were pious and made a good beginning, may fall into the moſt enormous crimes when they grow remiſs and careleſs, and do ſometimes make a very bad end. Laſtly, *Joaſh*'s fate was like that of other bad kings; the ſcripture ſays, *God delivered him up to the Syrians, his enemies*, though they were few in number: he was killed in his bed by his own ſubjects, and buried with diſgrace; from whence we may conclude,

conclude, that thoſe who provoke the wrath of God by their ſins, experience ſoon or late the ſeverity of his judgments.

CHAP. XXV.

THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of *Ahaziah*, the eighth king of *Judah*. In the beginning of his reign, he behaved with piety; and being at war with the *Edomites*, by the advice of a man of God he ſent back all the *Iſraelites* he had taken into pay, and gained the victory over them. But afterwards he fell into idolatry, and ſerved the idols of the *Edomites* whom he had vanquiſhed; for which the prophet denounced his ruin. Some time after, he declared war againſt *Joaſh*, king of *Iſrael*, and was overcome: *Joaſh* entered *Jeruſalem*, and plundered the temple. *Amaziah*, when he had reigned twenty-nine years, was ſlain in a conſpiracy, and *Uzziah*, his ſon, ſucceeded him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE muſt firſt take notice of what was good and commendable in *Amaziah*. The ſcripture ſpeaks of him with commendation, becauſe when he put to death thoſe who had murdered his father *Joaſh*, he did not ſlay their children; wherein he behaved with juſtice and moderation, and conformed to the law of God, which forbids putting to death the children for their fathers ſins. *Amaziah*, likewiſe, expreſſed his ſubmiſſion to the divine commands, when he diſmiſſed the hundred thouſand *Iſraelites*, which he had hired for a great ſum of money; becauſe a prophet ordered him ſo to do, and told him, that ſhould he even loſe all that money, God was able to make up the loſs to him. *Amaziah* was rewarded for the regard he paid to the will of God, and gained a great

a great victory over the *Edomites*. This ſhews, that no reaſons of intereſt, or any other conſideration, ſhould hinder us from obeying the commands of God; and that he never wants means to reward thoſe who do his will, and put their truſt in him. II. But after this *Amaziah* ungratefully rebelled againſt God. Inſtead of acknowledging God the giver of this victory, he worſhipped the idols of the nation he had vanquiſhed; and when he was reproved for it by the prophet, he threatned to take away his life, if he did not hold his peace. Therefore God withdrew his protection from him; and the king of *Iſrael*, whom *Amaziah* had raſhly and haughtily provoked, came and ravaged his country, entered *Jeruſalem*, and plundered the temple, and the king's palace; which the kings of *Iſrael* had never done before. So that God, who did not think fit the *Iſraelites* ſhould aſſiſt *Amaziah* againſt the *Edomites*, made uſe of thoſe very *Iſraelites* to chaſtiſe *Amaziah* himſelf and his ſubjects. Laſtly, That prince periſhed in a miſerable manner, as his father had done, and was ſlain in a conſpiracy which was formed againſt him. The leſſon we from hence learn is this, that it will ſtand us in no ſtead to have done our duty for ſome time, if we do not perſevere; and that thoſe, who after they have begun well, caſt off the fear of God, may become ſo very corrupt, as even to be totally abandoned, and bring upon themſelves the moſt dreadful effects of the divine vengeance.

CHAP. XXVI.

THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of *Uzziah*, otherwiſe named *Azariah*, the ninth king of *Judah*. He adhered to the ſervice of God in the beginning of his reign, and proſpered; but growing afterwards corrupt, and even preſuming to exerciſe the

the prieſt's office, the Lord ſmote him with leproſy, and he was forced to live apart till the day of his death. *Jotham* his ſon reigned in his ſtead.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory of *Uzziah*, king of *Judah*, informs us, that he begun well, but made a very bad end. He at firſt behaved with piety, and applied himſelf to pleaſe God and to ſerve him, following the advice of a prophet named *Zechariah*; and whilſt he acted thus he proſpered. He was victorious over the *Philiſtines*, defended himſelf againſt the *Arabians*, made the *Ammonites* tributary, fortified *Jeruſalem*, and his reputation became exceeding great. But all this ſucceſs lifted him up, and made him forget himſelf to ſuch a degree, that he openly tranſgreſſed the laws of religion, attempting to offer incenſe in the temple, which none but the prieſts had a right to do. And while he was wroth, and obſtinately oppoſed the prieſts, who would have prevented him, God ſmote him with leproſy; upon which he was thruſt out of the temple, and forced to live apart all the reſt of his life. Here let us reflect, that good men grow corrupt when they ſuffer themſelves to be off their guard; and that in proſperity, which is a dangerous ſtate, men eaſily forget themſelves. What befel *Uzziah*, for attempting to offer incenſe in the temple, proved, that God would not have kings make any innovations or alterations in religion, nor to intrude upon the office of thoſe who are its miniſters. From hence we may conclude, that every one ſhould keep within the bounds of his calling, without interfering with other mens; and that as the governors of the church ought not to uſurp the office and authority of princes and magiſtrates; ſo neither ought theſe to uſurp the office of paſtors, nor pretend to order religious affairs according to their own fancy.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

JOTHAM, the tenth king of *Judah* ſucceeded his father *Uzziah*. He was a pious prince, and therefore the Lord made his reign to proſper. He died after a reign of ſixteen years, and left the kingdom to his ſon *Ahaz*.

REFLECTIONS.

JOTHAM is reckoned among the good kings of *Judah*. He walked in the ſteps of his father *Uzziah*, in what was right, but did not imitate his bad qualities; and by that means procured the favour of God, the effects of which he particularly experienced in his war with the *Ammonites*. Here let it be remarked, I. That all the kings of *Iſrael*, without exception, were idolators, whereas there were ſeveral good kings in the kingdom of *Judah*; though it was not in their power utterly to root out all ſuperſtitious and idolatrous practices. Now if among the kings of *Judah*, there were ſeveral found, who did great things towards making the fear of God flouriſh in their kingdom, the number ought to be much greater among the Chriſtian princes. II. We learn from the hiſtory of *Jotham*, and other good kings, that God bleſſed them, and made them proſper; whilſt idolatrous kings were puniſhed, during their reign, in their families, and many other ways. This was a ſenſible proof to all *Iſrael* that God took care of them, and was a powerful motive to fear him. God has at all times given men convincing proofs of his providence and juſt government of the world, in order to engage them to ſerve him, and look upon him as the Author of all their happineſs.

CHAP. XXVIII.

I. *AHAZ*, the eleventh king of *Judah*, gives himſelf up to the moſt abominable idolatry. II. God puniſhes him by means of *Reſin*, king of *Syria*, and *Pekah*, king of *Iſrael*, who made war againſt him; his army was defeated by the *Iſraelites*, who carried away with them to *Samaria* a great number of priſoners, and a large booty. But the prophet *Oded* remonſtrating with them, they ſent all the priſoners, and all the booty back again into the land of *Judah*. III. *Ahaz* calls in the aſſiſtance of the king of *Aſſyria*, againſt the kings of *Syria* and *Iſrael*; but this was of no ſervice to him. However, he perſiſted in his ſins, worſhipped idols, and after he had given proofs of his incorrigible impiety and obſtinacy throughout his whole reign, he died, having reigned ſixteen years, and was ſucceeded by his ſon *Hezekiah*.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us here conſider, I. The account of the many impieties of *Ahaz*, who, though he was the ſon of good king *Jotham*, degenerated from his father's virtues, and introduced abominable practices, which had never before been ſeen in *Jeruſalem*; he even made his children paſs through the fire in honour of his idols, as the antient *Canaanites* did. Such a height of impiety, in a prince who had the knowledge of the true God, it is ſcarce poſſible to conceive; and therefore he was not long before he felt the effects of the divine vengeance: God delivering him firſt into the hand of the king of *Syria*, and then to the king of *Iſrael*, who defeated him, and killed an hundred and twenty thouſand men, and carried away two hundred thouſand priſoners, with very great ſpoils. This was a very remark-

able

able example of the juſtice of God againſt the king and his kingdom. II. Obſerve, that though God, for the puniſhment of *Ahaz*, had permitted the king of *Iſrael* to kill a great many, and take a vaſt number of his ſubjects priſoners; yet the prophet *Oded* cenſured the *Iſraelites* for the cruelties they had exerciſed againſt their brethren, the men of *Judah*; and commanded them to ſend back the priſoners, and the ſpoil they had taken; which the *Iſraelites* very readily ſubmitted to, and ſent the priſoners back again with all tenderneſs; reſtoring the booty, and carrying upon beaſts all that were not able to walk. This hiſtory proves very evidently, that God does not approve of the cruelties and outrages which are uſual in time of war; and that we ſhould treat all men, even our enemies, with gentleneſs and moderation. And if God was angry with the *Iſraelites*, for making ſo great havock among their brethren; much more muſt he be provoked againſt Chriſtians, who, though they are all brethren, are too apt to be at war together, and to deſtroy one another. III. We ſee here how extremely wicked, and ſurpriſingly obſtinate *Ahaz* was. Inſtead of humbling himſelf, and applying to God for help, when attacked by the kings of *Syria* and *Iſrael*, he had recourſe to the king of *Aſſyria*, and carried his impiety to ſo great a height, as to aſcribe the ſtrength of the *Syrians* to their falſe gods; and ſaid, *Becauſe the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I ſacrifice to them, that they may help me.* Wherefore God, provoked with him, delivered him up to his enemies; the *Edomites* and *Philiſtines* gained ſeveral victories over him; and the king of *Aſſyria*, in whom he truſted, ravaged his dominions. But what is moſt of all ſhocking in the character of *Ahaz*, is, as the ſcripture remarks, his treſpaſſing yet more againſt the Lord, the greater his diſtreſs was. It is a ſign

of an incurable and deſperate degree of obſtinacy, when the corrections of the Almighty are uſeleſs, and when men, inſtead of improving, grow more wicked under affliction. The laſt thing to be conſidered is, that God, when he chaſtiſed *Ahaz*, was pleaſed at the ſame time to make the king of *Aſſyria* his inſtrument to puniſh the *Iſraelites* and *Syrians*, who had unjuſtly made war upon *Judah*, as we learn from the eighth chapter of *Iſaiah*. In ſuch events as theſe, the ways of Providence are very diſcernible, ſince God often makes wicked men his inſtruments, both to puniſh thoſe who offend him, and protect thoſe whom he deſigns to bleſs.

CHAP. XXIX.

HEZEKIAH, the twelfth king of *Judah*, was remarkable for his piety. He put down the idolatrous worſhip which his father *Ahaz* had introduced; he reſtored divine worſhip to its purity; and to this end he aſſembled together the prieſts and Levites, and addreſſed them in a grave and ſolemn exhortation. After this, he in a ſolemn manner renewed the covenant between God and all the people, and gave upon this occaſion ſhining proofs of his zeal and religious joy.

REFLECTIONS.

HEZEKIAH, a religious prince, though the ſon of a wicked and idolatrous father, was no ſooner in poſſeſſion of the throne, but being ſenſibly affected with the ſtate he ſaw religion in at that time, and ſincerely grieved to ſee ſo many proofs of God's wrath againſt the *Jews*, he thought how he might deſtroy idolatry, and reſtore the worſhip of God. He got together the prieſts and Levites, to purify the temple, to remove every thing out of it

which

which had been uſed to idolatrous purpoſes, and to caſt it out; after which the ſervice of God was reſtored. Then *Hezekiah* gathered all the rulers and the people together, and ſolemnly renewed the covenant with God. Princes and great men ſhould employ themſelves in nothing with more zeal and fervency, than in rooting out impiety, and ſupporting the cauſe of religion. To this purpoſe, the Lord's miniſters ſhould be encouraged, and magiſtrates ſhould forward them in their great undertaking, and the people on their parts, in imitation of *Hezekiah*'s ſubjects, ſhould comply with the good deſigns of their rulers. Such a behaviour as this moſt certainly ſecures the heavenly favour and protection, as we learn from the bleſſings and many ſignal deliverances God vouchſafed to *Hezekiah*, in conſideration of his piety and zeal.

CHAP. XXX.

I. *HEZEKIAH* proclaims the feaſt of the paſſover throughout the kingdom; he even invites to this feaſt the *Iſraelites*, who dwelt in the country belonging to the ten tribes. II. This done, the people aſſembled themſelves, threw down all the idolatrous altars in *Jeruſalem*, and the paſſover was kept with great ſolemnity, and with great demonſtrations of devotion and joy.

REFLECTIONS.

I. AS the paſſover was the principal token of God's covenant with the *Jews*, *Hezekiah*, who was willing to renew this covenant, and reſtore the divine worſhip, deſired to keep this feaſt, and liberally ſupplied, with the princes of the people, every thing that was neceſſary to that end. Theſe were new proofs of *Hezekiah*'s great zeal for the glory of

God. II. Another proof of *Hezekiah*'s extraordinary zeal, is his inviting to this ſolemn act of devotion, the *Iſraelites* that ſtill remained in the country of the ten tribes, though they were not his ſubjects, and, to this end, writing to them in a very pious and affecting ſtrain. True zeal endeavours to extend as far as poſſible, and when men are truly religious, they do all they can to engage other men to fear God, and to ſerve him, and to recover ſinners from the error of their ways. *Hezekiah*'s invitation did not produce on all the *Iſraelites* the ſame effect; ſome mocked, and others humbling themſelves, came to keep the paſſover at *Jeruſalem*. Thus it commonly happens; well diſpoſed minds receive with humility and joy the invitations of divine grace, whilſt wicked men reject them, and even make them the ſubject of their ſcoff and raillery. By what is here ſaid, we likewiſe learn, that among the *Iſraelites*, who remained in the kingdom of the ten tribes, after the *Aſſyrians* had ravaged that country, there were ſtill ſome good men remaining, but that the greateſt part were impious and hardened wretches, who had made no good uſe of the divine correction. Laſtly, There is this circumſtance in the hiſtory before us, which deſerves our attention. Thoſe who came out of the country of the ten tribes to *Jeruſalem*, though they were not able to do all that the law of *Moſes* preſcribed before the celebration of the paſſover, did nevertheleſs eat thereof. But *Hezekiah*, fearing God ſhould be angry with them for it, beſeeched him to pardon them, and to accept the devotions of all thoſe who had ſought him with an upright and honeſt heart, though they were not purified according to all the cuſtoms and ceremonies of the law. This proves, that *Hezekiah*'s piety was well informed; he knew that no one ſhould voluntarily, and in contempt, neglect the external duties of divine worſhip; but

then

then he was perſuaded at the ſame time that God regards the heart more than ceremonies; and, when they cannot be obſerved, favourably receives the prayers and devotions of all thoſe who ſeek him with ſincerity. *Hezekiah* was not diſappointed in his expectation; for we are told in this chapter, *that the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah*, and accepted the devotions of the people, the prieſts, and the Levites; and that *their prayer came up to his holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven.*

CHAP. XXXI.

KING *Hezekiah* deſtroys idolatry in his own kingdom, and even in the country of the ten tribes; reſtores divine ſervice to its due order, provides for the maintenance of the prieſts and Levites, and for the regular diſcharge of their ſeveral functions; commanding the tithes and firſt fruits to be paid according to the law; which the people obeyed with great chearfulneſs.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter affords us, in good king *Hezekiah*, an example of unwearied piety. As ſoon as the celebration of the paſſover was ended, he commanded the people to break down the images, and to remove every thing that tended to idolatry, not only in his own kingdom, but as far as he could in the country of the ten tribes; which they executed with great zeal; ſo that this prince was the reſtorer of true religion in *Iſrael*. True piety appears, not only in performing the external acts of religious worſhip; but chiefly in its fruits and effects, when men apply themſelves ſincerely to do what is pleaſing in God's ſight, and to put away every thing that may diſpleaſe him. After this, *Hezekiah* ſet himſelf to reſtore the

divine worſhip, and to reinſtate the prieſts and Levites in their proper functions; to this end he contributed part of his own revenues; and ordered the tenths, firſt-fruits, and offerings, to be paid for the future according to the law; which his ſubjects readily and chearfully obeyed; bringing in great plenty from all parts what was required of them. No Chriſtian can be excuſed contributing his part, according to his ſtation and ability, towards making religion flouriſh and divine worſhip be performed, and the ſacred hiſtory exerciſed in a ſuitable and convenient manner. This is a care well worth the attention of Chriſtian princes; and by this they may acquire the greateſt glory before God and man. The ready compliance of *Hezekiah*'s ſubjects with the good intentions of their king, ſhews, that the zeal and good example of princes is of great weight, and that they have it in their power to do great things for God and religion. The laſt words of this chapter are remarkable; where it is ſaid, that *Hezekiah did that which was good and right before the Lord his God*; that *in every work that he began in the ſervice of the houſe of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to ſeek his God, he did it with all his heart, and proſpered.* What men do in the ſervice of the houſe of God with a ſincere intention, is always acceptable in his ſight; nor does he ever fail to bleſs thoſe who labour with an honeſt heart to promote his glory.

CHAP. XXXII.

I. HEZEKIAH, being attacked by *Sennacherib*, king of *Aſſyria*, fortifies the city of *Jeruſalem*, and exhorts the people to put their truſt in God. II. *Sennacherib* ſends officers from his army, to ſummon *Hezekiah* and his ſubjects to ſurrender,

and

and to utter many blaſphemous words againſt God. III. But God, moved by the prayers of *Hezekiah*, and by the interceſſion of the prophet *Iſaiah*, deſtroys *Sennacherib*'s army, and he returning to his country is ſlain by his own ſons. IV. About that time, *Hezekiah* was cured of a mortal diſeaſe; but in his proſperity forgot himſelf, and ſhewed all his treaſures to the king of *Babylon*'s ambaſſadors. Laſtly, After a reign of twenty-nine years, he died, and after him reigned his ſon *Manaſſeh*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. KING *Hezekiah*, as ſoon as he was informed *Sennacherib* deſigned to beſiege *Jeruſalem*, acted like a prudent prince, in fortifying the city, and ſtopping all the fountains which were without the city, that the *Aſſyrians* might find no water: And he gave at the ſame time proof of his piety and confidence in God, when he exhorted his ſubjects to fear nothing, but rely upon the Lord. Wiſe and godly men join the maxims of prudence with the rules of religion; they never neglect the lawful means which Providence puts in their power to guard againſt the dangers that threaten them; but their confidence they place in God. II. The next thing to be attended to, is the impious and inſolent manner in which the meſſengers of *Sennacherib* ſpake concerning the true God, comparing him to idols; and ſaying, that as the gods of the ſeveral nations which *Sennacherib* had conquered, were not able to deliver thoſe nations, ſo neither would the God whom *Hezekiah* worſhipped be able to deliver him. The inſolent, blaſphemous, and menacing ſpeeches of this idolatrous king, which aſtoniſhed *Hezekiah*, haſtened his ruin, and provoked the Lord to deſtroy him, by ſending an angel to cut off in one night his numerous army, and by ſuffering his ſons to kill him, when he was returned into his

his own country. If God thus took vengeance of this idolatrous prince for his inſults, much more ſeverely will he take vengeance of thoſe wicked Chriſtians who openly defy him. III. This deliverance, which God vouchſafed to *Hezekiah*, procured him great regard from the neighbouring princes; and even induced them to bring from all parts offerings to God in the temple at *Jeruſalem*. Thus God makes all things work together for the good of thoſe that love him, and to the glory of his name. IV. God gave *Hezekiah*, at that time, a freſh proof of his kindneſs, in healing him of a mortal diſeaſe; but the ſacred hiſtory informs us, that he was not truly thankful for the bleſſing, and that he ſinned, in ſhewing his treaſures to the ambaſſadors of the king of *Babylon*; which he did no doubt out of vanity, and with a deſign to procure reſpect from their maſter. In proſperity men eaſily forget themſelves, and grow remiſs, and thereby cauſe God to exerciſe them afreſh with his chaſtening diſpenſations. V. It is ſaid in this chapter, that the ambaſſadors of the king of *Babylon* had orders to enquire concerning the miracle that had happened, when the ſhadow of the ſun went back ten degrees in the time of *Hezekiah*'s ſickneſs; which is a proof of the certainty of the miracle, and ſhews, that it had been taken notice of at *Babylon*. Laſtly, *Hezekiah* died full of glory; and was honoured in a particular manner after his death; but his greateſt glory was, the teſtimony the ſcripture bears of his piety and zeal; and this will make the memory of this prince for ever honourable in the church, and his example a pattern to thoſe who are called by God to govern nations.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIII.

IN the hiſtory of *Manaſſeh*, the thirteenth king of *Judah*, we ſee, I. His ſin in falling into idolatry and all manner of abominations. II. His puniſhment, when God ſuffered him to be carried captive to *Babylon*. III. His repentance, and pardon from God. IV. His reſtoration to the kingdom, and his zeal in repairing the evil he had done, and deſtroying idolatry. V. His death, and the reign of his ſon *Amon*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are four things remarkable in the hiſtory of king *Manaſſeh*: I. That, inſtead of imitating the piety of his father *Hezekiah*, he fell into the moſt deteſtable idolatry, ſhed innocent blood in great abundance, and exceeded in wickedneſs all the wicked kings of *Judah* that went before him; and though God ſent prophets to warn him and his people, they continued to offend him more and more. II. That God, provoked at the ſins of *Manaſſeh* and his people, threatned them by his prophets with the total deſtruction of the kingdom of *Judah*; and that *Manaſſeh* was put in chains, and carried to *Babylon*; wherein we ſee the completion of *Iſaiah*'s prophecy to *Hezekiah*, Iſai. xxxix. 7. III. That this prince, when in captivity, humbled himſelf and beſought the Lord; who, in conſideration of his humiliation, brought him again to *Jeruſalem*. IV. That *Manaſſeh*, after his reſtoration, ſhewed the ſincerity of his repentance, by taking away the ſtrange gods, and uſing his utmoſt endeavours to aboliſh idolatry, and reſtore religion to its purity. This hiſtory leads us to reflect, that the children of godly parents do not always inherit their piety; and that thoſe, who, like *Manaſſeh*,

ſeh, forſake God in their youth, and have an opportunity to gratify their paſſions, run into the greateſt exceſs of wickedneſs; and that impious princes are the authors of public calamities, and expoſe themſelves and their ſubjects to the wrath of God. The repentance of *Manaſſeh* ſhould be well conſidered, as it repreſents, on one hand, the neceſſity and advantage of afflictions; and on the other affords us an extraordinary inſtance of God's mercy to the greateſt ſinners, when they humble themſelves and make a good uſe of his corrections. Let us likewiſe ſeriouſly attend to *Manaſſeh*'s behaviour after his reſtoration; which was directly oppoſite to his former conduct; for during a long reign, he remedied the faults he had committed in his youth. True repentance conſiſts in removing and remedying, as much as poſſible, the evil we have done, and in amending our lives. That we may the better enter into theſe reflections, we ſhould add to the reading of this chapter, the prayer which *Manaſſeh* made while a captive in *Babylon*, which we find in the Apocryphal Books. As to *Amon*, the ſon of *Manaſſeh*, the fourteenth king of *Judah*, he, inſtead of improving by what had happened to his father, again introduced idolatry; but he being ſlain in a conſpiracy, received the juſt reward of his deeds.

CHAP. XXXIV.

JOSIAH, the fifteenth king of *Judah*, whoſe hiſtory begins here, was an excellent prince. While he was yet very young, he undertook to deſtroy idolatry, and repaired the temple. In his time the Book of the Law was found, which he cauſed to be read; and having conſulted *Huldah* the propheteſs, ſhe let him know that the threatnings contained in that book were going to be put in execution, and that the kingdom of *Judah* would ſoon be deſtroyed; but

but that God would take *Joſiah* to himſelf before theſe misfortunes came upon them. When the king heard this, he renewed the covenant with God, and laboured with all his power to reſtore religion to its purity.

REFLECTIONS.

THOSE who are in authority over others, and in general all Chriſtians, have a moſt noble example of attachment to religion, and zeal for the glory of God, in the perſon of *Joſiah*, when he took ſo much care to purge *Jeruſalem* and the whole country from the idolatry which had been again introduced by his father *Amon*. Kings and princes who profeſs Chriſtianity, ought to be as attentive to the concerns of religion, and as zealous to baniſh vice, irreligion, and profaneneſs out of their ſtates, as the good kings of *Judah* were to root out idolatry. *Joſiah* gave particular proof of his ſincerity, when, upon hearing them read the Book of the Law, which had been found in the temple, he was terrified at the curſes contained in it, and ſent to conſult *Huldah* the propheteſs what he muſt do to avert the miſeries which the *Jews* were threatned with. Such is the effect which the word of God and his threatnings produce on thoſe who fear him; when they hear his voice, they humble themſelves; and when they ſee his wrath kindled, they ſeek means to appeaſe it. The anſwer which *Huldah* ſent the king is remarkable; ſhe told him, that God would at length execute upon *Jeruſalem* and its inhabitants the threatnings written in the law of *Moſes*; becauſe they had provoked him to wrath with their idolatry, and other abominations; but withal, ſhe let the king know, that God would take him before this deſolation came upon them. When men are arrived to a certain degree of wickedneſs, God muſt take vengeance; at ſuch a time, good men can no longer avert his judgments;

ments; but then God removes them out of the world, that they may not be involved in the evils which are to come. So that death is not always a proof of God's diſpleaſure, for he ſometimes ſhortens the days of thoſe he loves moſt, as it happened to good king *Joſiah*; who, on account of his piety, was acceptable in the ſight of God, and yet died in the flower of his age. We muſt conſider, laſtly, that though God had informed *Joſiah* that the ruin of the kingdom of *Judah* was irreverſible, and that he himſelf ſhould ſurely die, he abated nothing of his zeal. He gathered together the rulers and all the people, to renew the covenant with God; he laboured with all his might to aboliſh idolatry and debauchery, and employed the remainder of his life in acts of piety and religion. Whatever circumſtances a good man may be in, and whatever the event of things may be, he always takes care to do his own duty, and dedicates with joy the life and ſtrength which God has given him, to his glory and the public good.

CHAP. XXXV.

I. KING *Joſiah* keeps the paſſover with great ſolemnity, in the eighteenth year of his reign. II. Thirteen years after, going to fight againſt the king of *Egypt*, he is wounded in the engagement, and dies at *Jeruſalem*, greatly lamented by all his ſubjects.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we have freſh proofs of the great zeal which animated king *Joſiah*. In his whole life he neglected nothing which might tend to recover religion to a ſtate of purity, and appeaſe the wrath of God which was ready to fall upon the *Jews*. He and all the people kept the paſſover in ſo ſolemn a man-

a manner, that the ſcripture obſerves, *there had never been any thing like it*, in the reigns of any of his predeceſſors, from the days of *Samuel* the prophet. So that this good prince did all he could to pleaſe the Lord, and to inſpire his ſubjects with the ſame religious ſentiments. This ſhould teach us never to be weary in well doing, but to improve more and more, and to perſevere unto the end. This example ſhould, in a particular manner, make an impreſſion upon Chriſtian princes and magiſtrates, and encourage them to be hearty and ſincere in promoting true holineſs and religion; and to render themſelves acceptable in the ſight of God and man, by the ſame methods which made *Joſiah*, one of the beſt and moſt excellent princes the world ever produced. But great as *Joſiah*'s piety was, kings and princes, who profeſs to believe in *Jeſus Chriſt*, ought to ſurpaſs in this reſpect the beſt kings among the ancient people of God. This prince, however, it appears was guilty of a fault, in raſhly engaging in a war againſt the king of *Egypt*, which proved the occaſion of his being ſlain. After his death, all the people of *Judah* and *Jeruſalem* lamented greatly, and the prophet *Jeremiah* made lamentation for him. It is a great, and often an irreparable loſs to a nation, when God takes from them prudent and religious governors. This the *Jews* experienced after the death of *Joſiah*, who was the laſt good king of *Judah*; whereas his ſucceſſors were all wicked, and in a little time brought the kingdom of *Judah* to a fatal end, as we ſee in the following chapter.

CHAP. XXXVI.

THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of the four laſt kings of *Judah*. I. The firſt was *Jehoahaz*, ſon of *Joſiah*, who reigned three months, and was then

then depoſed by the king of *Egypt*. II. The ſecond was *Eliakim*, otherwiſe named *Jehoiakim*, who was likewiſe an idolator, and reigned eleven years. *Nebuchadnezzar* carried him away to *Babylon*, with part of the ſacred veſſels. He returned, however, to *Jeruſalem*, where he was ſlain and caſt out *without burial*, as we read in the Book of *Jeremiah*. III. After him his ſon *Jehoiachin* reigned three months, and was likewiſe carried to *Babylon* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, who made *Zedekiah*, *Jehoiachin*'s uncle, king in his ſtead; he was the nineteenth and laſt king of *Judah*. IV. Under the reign of *Zedekiah*, the *Jews* ſtill perſiſting in their obſtinacy and rebellion, *Jeruſalem* was taken and burnt, together with the temple, and the *Jews* went into captivity to *Babylon*, where they remained till the time of *Cyrus*, king of *Perſia*, who ſet them at liberty, and permitted them to return to *Jeruſalem* and rebuild the temple.

REFLECTIONS.

WE find in the hiſtory of the four laſt kings of *Judah*, that notwithſtanding the warnings God had given them, and though they ſaw his protection withdrawn from them, they provoked the Lord more and more by their idolatry; and the people followed their ſteps. The ſcripture takes particular notice, that before God deſtroyed the *Jews* he ſent his ſervants *to exhort them to repentance, becauſe he had compaſſion on his people*; but that this hardened people *mocked them, and deſpiſed the word of the Lord; ſo that his wrath was kindled, and there was no remedy*. Behold how God, who is juſt and gracious, repeats his warnings, in proportion as men more inſolently provoke him! and behold, too, what is the effect of a continual and open contempt of God's word and loving kindneſs! God delivered the *Jews* into the hand of the *Babylonians*, who took *Jeruſalem* and

and burnt it, and ſhed a vaſt deal of blood, even in the temple, without pitying women or children, old or young. The temple itſelf was not ſpared, but was plundered and burnt by the *Chaldeans*, and the *Jews* who eſcaped that deſolation were carried to *Babylon*, where they remained in captivity. Thus the threatnings which God had before ſo many times denounced, were at laſt put in execution, and by this grand event we learn what thoſe have reaſon to expect who abuſe the grace of God, and his patience and long ſuffering, and obſtinately perſiſt in their ſins.

The end of the Second Book of CHRONICLES.

THE BOOK OF EZRA.

ARGUMENT.

In this Book we are informed that Cyrus, *king of* Perſia, *permitted the* Jews *to return into* Judea, *and to rebuild the temple and the city of* Jeruſalem, *after they had been captives ſeventy years; that they were permitted to return under the conduct of* Zorobabel, *prince of the royal family of* Judah, *and grandſon to king* Jechoniah, *and under the conduct of* Jeſhua *the high prieſt. But the* Jews *met with great oppoſition from the neighbouring nations, till the time of king* Darius, *who gave leave again to the* Jews *to build their temple, and ſent* Ezra *the prieſt into* Judea. *This* Ezra *was a man of great knowledge in the law of God, endued with extraordinary zeal and prudence, and made ſeveral regulations for reſtoring order, both in religious and civil government.*

CHAP. I.

CYRUS publiſhes an edict, permitting the *Jews* to return into their own country and to build the temple, and cauſes the holy veſſels to be reſtored to them, which *Nebuchadnezzar* had taken away from *Jeruſalem.*

RE-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. THE firſt thing we are here to take notice of, is the completion of two remarkable prophecies. One is the prophecy of *Iſaiah*, who foretold, two hundred years before, that a king named *Cyrus* ſhould ſend the *Jews* back into their own country, and give commandment for rebuilding *Jeruſalem* and the temple; the other, is the prediction of *Jeremiah*, who had exactly noted the duration of the *Babyloniſh* captivity, ſaying, that the *Jews ſhould return at the end of ſeventy years.* II. This return of the *Jews* from their captivity, is a proof of the goodneſs of God towards his people, and ſhews, that if he ſuffers his church to be perſecuted, he will not deſtroy it, but deſires to purify it and to preſerve it for ever. III. Let us next obſerve, that the reſtoration of the *Jews* was brought about by *Cyrus*, a heathen prince; that the king ſhewed great reſpect for the God whom the *Jews* adored, and ordered that all the holy veſſels, which *Nebuchadnezzar* had taken out of the temple of *Jeruſalem*, ſhould be reſtored. God turns the hearts of kings as he pleaſes, and as he makes uſe of them to chaſtiſe his church, ſo he ſometimes reſtores peace by their means, which ſhould be a motive to us to fear him, and to depend upon his power and goodneſs. IV. If *Cyrus*, who was a heathen and an idolatrous prince, reſtored the ſacred veſſels to the *Jews*, Chriſtian kings and princes ſhould be very cautious how they with-hold things dedicated to the ſervice of God, or uſe them to any but religious purpoſes.

CHAP. II.

THE number of the *Jews*, of the prieſts and Levites, who returned from *Babylon* to *Judea*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. FROM the number of the *Jews* who returned from *Babylon* to *Judea*, in conſequence of king *Cyrus*'s edict, and who were no more than forty-two thouſand, we may conclude that this people, once ſo numerous, were very much diminiſhed. However, it muſt be obſerved, that many ſtill remained at *Babylon*, who returned afterwards, at ſeveral times, as we read in the ſeventh and eighth chapters of this Book. II. It is evident from this chapter, that the *Jews* were at that time very exact in their genealogies, and thoſe who pretended to be of the prieſtly order, and could not prove their deſcent, were excluded from the prieſthood. III. We ſee that the *Jews*, notwithſtanding the low eſtate they were then in, liberally contributed to the rebuilding the temple and reſtoring the ſervice of God.

CHAP. III.

I. THE *Jews* being returned from *Babylon* to *Jeruſalem*, build an altar, upon which they offer ſacrifices; they keep the feaſt of tabernacles and renew the ordinary ſervice till the temple was rebuilt. II. After this they lay the foundation of the temple, to the great joy of ſome, and the grief of others.

REFLECTIONS.

AS ſoon as the *Jews* were returned from *Babylon*, they ſet about rebuilding the temple, in order again to perform divine ſervice in it. This was the effect of their piety, and eſpecially of the zeal of their rulers, *Jeſhua* the high prieſt, and *Zorobabel*, prince of *Judah*. We ought all of us to have the ſame zeal, in labouring for the edification of the church;

church; theſe are the cares which ſhould above all poſſeſs our minds; and our greateſt joy ſhould be, to ſee the kingdom of God eſtabliſhed and confirmed. H. It is to be obſerved, that though the temple was rebuilt at that time, this ſecond temple was not equal to that formerly built by *Solomon*, and deſtroyed by the *Babylonians*, which made the old men, who had ſeen the firſt temple, weep when they were beginning to build the ſecond. By this the *Jews* might be convinced, that the worſhip of God did not conſiſt in the riches and magnificence of the building, nor in pompous ceremonies; and this ſhewed too, that the time would come when God would wean the *Jews* from things of an external and viſible nature, and would eſtabliſh among men a ſpiritual worſhip, ſuch as that of the Goſpel. Nevertheleſs, if the ſecond temple was inferior to *Solomon*'s in magnificence, it was to ſurpaſs it far in glory, by the advantage which the *Jews* would enjoy in ſeeing the Meſſiah whilſt this latter temple remained.

CHAP. IV.

THE *Jews* refuſing to let the *Samaritans* build the temple with them, the *Samaritans* wrote letters againſt them to the king of *Perſia*, which made the work be ſeveral times interrupted, under the reign of *Cyrus*, *Ahaſuerus* his ſucceſſor, otherwiſe named *Cambyſes*, and under *Artaxerxes*, called likewiſe *Smerdis*, to whom the *Samaritans* wrote the letter contained in this chapter, which induced that king to forbid the *Jews* to go on with the building of the city and temple. Things continued in this ſtate till the ſecond year of king *Darius*, the ſon of *Hyſtaſpes*, king of *Perſia*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we ſee that the *Samaritans*, after they had endeavoured, but without ſucceſs, to hinder the *Jews* by their artifices from building of the temple of *Jeruſalem*, ſent letters to the king of *Perſia*, and by their calumnies put a ſtop to the building which they had begun. From whence we may obſerve, that God ſometimes permits the moſt holy undertakings to be retarded; and that the church has always its enemies, which attack it ſometimes by lies and artifice, and ſometimes by open violence. Here we ſee particularly, that the enemies of the *Jews* had recourſe to calumny, to incenſe the kings of *Perſia* againſt them, repreſenting them as a ſet of rebels and ſeditious perſons, and as enemies to kings. It has always been the lot of the church, and of the true worſhippers of God, to be perſecuted and ſlandered. But the ſequel will ſhew us, that God does at length confound the crafty devices of the wicked; that he makes manifeſt the innocence of his children; and that after he has tried them, he makes thoſe become their friends who had been their greateſt enemies.

CHAP. V.

I. THE prophets *Haggai* and *Zechariah* exhort the *Jews* to rebuild the temple. II. The governors of that country write to king *Darius*, the ſon of *Hyſtaſpes*, to inform him of the deſign of the *Jews*, and to deſire his orders concerning it.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we are to take notice, that while the building of the temple was interrupted, God ſent *Zechariah* and *Haggai*, his prophets, to encou-

rage

rage the *Jews*, and to engage them to renew their application to that pious deſign; and that the exhortations of theſe holy men had ſo much weight with them, that, notwithſtanding the obſtructions they met with from the governors of that country, the *Jews* continued the work, till the pleaſure of king *Darius* was known. God never forſakes his church, he always raiſes up, when he judges it neceſſary, faithful miniſters to labour in its edification; and we ought never to be diſheartened when our enterpriſes are juſt, and conformable to the will of God, for his Providence will give them a happy iſſue, though it ſeem contrary to all appearance. Thus it happened at this time; the letters which the officers of king *Darius* wrote againſt the *Jews*, occaſioned his ſearching for the edict which *Cyrus* had publiſhed in their behalf, about ſeventeen years before, and to give orders to prevent their being moleſted for the future; ſo that what their enemies deſigned for their deſtruction, proved the means of putting the *Jews* in a condition of going on with their enterpriſe.

CHAP. VI.

I. KING *Darius* having found the edict which *Cyrus* had granted in favour of the *Jews*, orders his officers not to interrupt them in building the temple, and even to furniſh them with things neceſſary for that purpoſe, and for the ſacrifices they were to offer in *Jeruſalem*. II. In four years the temple was finiſhed and dedicated; divine ſervice again performed in it; and the paſſover celebrated with great joy and ſolemnity.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to obſerve here the juſtice of king *Darius* towards the *Jews*, and the concern he

ſhewed, in haſtening the rebuilding of the temple of *Jeruſalem*, even by furniſhing a part of the neceſſary expences, both for that and for the performance of divine ſervice, out of his own revenues. Above all, this prince expreſſed his reſpect for the *Jewiſh* religion, and for the God they worſhipped, requiring that the *Jews* ſhould offer up prayers and ſacrifices to God for him and his family, and even threatning to puniſh ſeverely all thoſe who ſhould oppoſe their deſign. Such ſentiments as theſe, and ſuch behaviour in an idolatrous prince, ſhew very plainly what is the duty of the princes and great men of the world, with regard to the divine ſervice; and this king will one day condemn Chriſtian princes and magiſtrates, who profeſſing to know God and to ſerve him, do not reverence religion and the Deity as they ought; do not contribute to the utmoſt of their power to the ſervice of God, as he requires; and do not confeſs, that their happineſs depends upon his favour, and the prayers which the church offers up to God for them. In conſequence of this decree, the *Jews* had the comfort to finiſh the building of the temple, to dedicate it, and to celebrate the paſſover with joy, praiſing God for having turned the heart of the king in their favour. In this change in the ſtate of the *Jews*, we cannot ſufficiently admire the Providence of God, and the care he takes of his people: we ſee that God watches over the church, and finds means to ſupport it, even by idolatrous princes, and in places where it has been moſt perſecuted.

CHAP. VII.

I. EZRA goes into *Judea*, by order of king *Artaxerxes*, ſurnamed *Longimanus*, to make an end of ſettling religion and divine ſervice, and to appoint judges and magiſtrates. This king makes a decree,

decree, permitting the *Jews*, who were ſtill in his dominions, to return to *Jeruſalem*; he commits into *Ezra*'s hand the gold and ſilver, which he and the chief men of his court had offered for the temple and the ſacrifices, and he orders his treaſurers to aſſiſt them out of his revenues, on the ſame account. II. *Ezra* returns thanks to God for having inclined the king to be favourable to them. From the firſt return of the *Jews*, under the conduct of *Zorobabel*, in the time of *Cyrus*, to this journey of *Ezra*, were about ſeventy years.

REFLECTIONS.

THE obſervations we are to make here, are, I. That, after the temple was rebuilt, God ſent to *Judea* the prieſt *Ezra*, a man well verſed in the law, full of zeal and divinely inſpired, that he might regulate every thing relating to religion in a proper manner. The church will be for ever beholden to this holy man; for by his care the divine worſhip, the law, and the ſacred writings were reſtored; and therefore his memory ought to be precious in the Chriſtian church, as it always was in the *Jewiſh*. From whence we may take notice, how neceſſary it is for the edification of the church, that there ſhould be in it underſtanding and faithful miniſters, to inſtruct the people, and teach them to ſerve God as they ought. II. We ſee here that *Artaxerxes*, who was an idolatrous king, very liberally furniſhed a part of what was neceſſary for maintaining divine ſervice; and that he gave *Ezra* a power to eſtabliſh magiſtrates for the government of the *Jews*. Theſe are marks of a great reſpect for religion, and acts of juſtice and equity which ought to be imitated by all, and eſpecially by the great. III. *Ezra*'s thankſgiving to God, for putting it into the heart of the king and his counſellors to favour the *Jews*, ſhews that this worthy miniſter of

of religion, was full of piety and zeal. Thus pious men give God all the glory of the good that befals them, and put their whole truſt in him in proſperity and adverſity.

CHAP. VIII.

I. THE number of the *Jews*, who returned into *Judea* with *Ezra* in the ſeventeenth year of the reign of *Artaxerxes Longimanus*. II. *Ezra*, before he ſet out on his journey with the *Jews*, kept a faſt to implore the divine protection. III. He gives to the prieſts the gold and ſilver, which the king and his counſellors had offered for the temple. IV. He ſets out with the *Jews* that accompanied him, and arrives ſafe at *Jeruſalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IT appears from the number of *Jews* that went from *Babylon* with *Ezra*, who were about eighteen hundred, that all the *Jews* did not return to *Jeruſalem* with *Zorobabel* in the reign of *Cyrus*; and that many remained in the country where they were carried captives. II. It is to be remarked, that when *Ezra* was going to ſet out for *Judea*, he deſired no ſoldiers of the king to eſcort him in his journey, though he could with eaſe have obtained it. The reaſon he gives himſelf for not doing it, was, for fear they ſhould think he diſtruſted the divine aſſiſtance; but he implored the bleſſing of the Almighty by faſting and prayer. This behaviour might convince the idolatrous people among whom he lived, that he had a perfect confidence in the divine protection. Good men truſt in God rather than in man; their principal ſecurity they ſeek in prayer, and God on his part hears their prayers and bleſſes them, as he did *Ezra*, who had a proſperous journey, and

thoſe

thoſe that were with him. Laſtly, It is to be remarked, that king *Artaxerxes* and the moſt diſtinguiſhed of his lords, ſent by the hands of *Ezra* rich preſents and conſiderable offerings to *Jeruſalem*. This affords us a freſh proof of the particular care Providence took of the *Jews*, and is an example, which ſhould animate the rich and great to be in a particular manner liberal, whenever they have an opportunity to do any thing for God and religion.

CHAP. IX.

EZRA being informed, when he came to *Jeruſalem*, that ſeveral *Jews*, even of the prieſts and rulers themſelves, had married idolatrous women, which was contrary to the law of God; he was extremely troubled at it, humbled himſelf before God, and offered up an excellent prayer, in which he confeſſes the ſins of the *Jews*, acknowledges the juſtice of God's judgments upon them, and promiſes in their name, that they ſhould no longer diſobey the commandments, and break the covenant of the Lord, as they had done.

REFLECTIONS.

IT appears from this chapter, I. That after the return from the captivity, very great irregularities had crept in among the *Jews*; and in particular, that many of them, even of their rulers, had married wives that were ſtrangers and idolators; and therefore it was expedient God ſhould raiſe up zealous perſons, ſuch as *Ezra* the prieſt, to reform theſe abuſes. It is a great misfortune when men openly tranſgreſs the laws of God, and eſpecially, when thoſe who fill the higheſt ſtations authoriſe this licentiouſneſs by their own example. II. As ſoon as *Ezra* was informed that the *Jews* had contracted theſe unlawful marriages, he was extremely concern-

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ed at it, and endeavoured to remedy it. He gave public tokens of his affliction, by praying and humbling himſelf before God. Thoſe who have true piety and zeal, afflict and humble themſelves, not only for the evils that befal them, and for their own faults, but alſo for the ſins of other men. The prayer which *Ezra* made upon this occaſion is very inſtructive. He therein acknowledges with profound humility, that the ſins of the *Jews* had obliged the Lord to chaſtiſe them, and had reduced them to the ſervile condition they were in at that time. This ſhews us, that in the evils we ſuffer we ſhould always give glory to God, and acknowledge the righteouſneſs of his judgments. But as *Ezra*, after he had confeſſed the ſins of the *Jews*, promiſed they ſhould no more break the law of God; we muſt acknowledge, that the means to obtain the return of God's grace and remiſſion of our paſt ſins, is not to fall into them again, but to forſake them by a ſpeedy and ſincere converſion.

CHAP. X.

EZRA, after he had humbled himſelf before God, gathers together all the *Jews*; repreſents to thoſe that had married ſtrange women the great ſin they had been guilty of; and by the advice of the chief men and the whole aſſembly he engages them to put away thoſe women, which was punctually performed, beginning with the prieſts who had contracted ſuch kind of marriages.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this chapter we are to conſider, that *Ezra*, after he had faſted and confeſſed the ſins of the *Jews*, ſet himſelf to reform the abuſes, and to prevent the diſorders that had been introduced among them.

them. It is not ſufficient to pray and make confeſſion of our ſins, and to be ſomewhat grieved for them; the chief effect of prayer and confeſſion, ſhould be to put a ſtop to them, and utterly forſake them. This ſhews alſo, that the duty of magiſtrates and miniſters of God, is to make uſe of their exhortations and authority for reſtraining licentiouſneſs, and reforming all abuſes; and that ſhould the diſorders be general and great, and the guilty perſons of a diſtinguiſhed character and ſtation, they ought not to be tolerated, nor ſhould the reformers be diſcouraged. We are eſpecially to take notice, that the *Jews* obeyed *Ezra* and the prieſts, by putting away the ſtrange wives they had married contrary to the command of God; which muſt needs be grievous to them, and the more ſo becauſe ſeveral had children by thoſe wives; which was therefore a great proof of their ſubmiſſion, and of the ſincerity of their repentance. Thus ſinners who are truly affected with their faults, and deſire to obtain forgiveneſs of them, make no ſcruple to do all that God commands, though it be never ſo harſh and difficult, and even to renounce all that is moſt dear to them. Finally, We may ſee by this chapter, that marriages and alliances with idolators, are diſpleaſing to God, and ought not to be permitted among thoſe who profeſs the true religion.

The end of the Book of EZRA.

THE

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.

ARGUMENT.

The Book of Nehemiah *is a continuation of the history of the state of the* Jews, *after their return from the* Babylonish *captivity.* Nehemiah *made two journeys into* Judea, *by the permission of* Artaxerxes Longimanus, *king of* Persia. *The first was in the twentieth year of that prince's reign, thirteen years after* Ezra's *journey; and the second about twelve years after. He went there in quality of governor of the* Jews, *to rebuild the city of* Jerusalem, *and to establish good order therein. In all his conduct he shewed great zeal for God, and at the same time much prudence, resolution and confidence in the Divine Being. Magistrates should read and meditate on this Book with great attention, and improve by the noble examples of piety and wisdom contained in it.*

CHAP. I.

NEHEMIAH being informed of the sad condition *Jerusalem* was in, is sensibly affected with it, and prays the Lord to have compassion on that city.

RE-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

FROM the very beginning of the Book of *Nehemiah*, we meet with marks of the ardent piety of this holy man. This appears in his grief, to hear of the deplorable ſtate the city of *Jeruſalem* and all the *Jews* were in; and in that excellent and fervent prayer which he made, to implore the mercy of God on their behalf, to obtain pardon for their ſins, and their complete reſtoration. All thoſe who fear God, and eſpecially thoſe who are in an exalted ſtation, ſhould, like *Nehemiah*, be more concerned for the church of God, than for any other thing; ſhould ſympathize in the evils that befal it, pray continually for it, and labour as much as poſſible to promote its happineſs and proſperity.

CHAP. II.

I. NEHEMIAH, who was cup-bearer to king *Artaxerxes*, obtains leave of him to take a journey to *Jeruſalem*, and procures the neceſſary letters on that occaſion. II. Being arrived there, and having viſited the city, he exhorts the magiſtrates and the people to rebuild the gates and the walls; which they ſet themſelves about, notwithſtanding the oppoſition of their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE it muſt be obſerved, I. That though *Nehemiah* enjoyed a conſiderable poſt at the court of *Artaxerxes*, and was greatly in favour with that prince; yet he was ſincerely grieved when he was informed of what condition *Jeruſalem* was then in, and deſired leave of the king to go into *Judea*. This is an excellent example of the great piety and zeal of *Nehemiah*. Good men are more concerned for

for the glory of God than their own intereſt; and whilſt they ſee that glory obſtructed, and the church under affliction, they cannot reliſh any pleaſure, though they ſhould enjoy the greateſt worldly advantages. This ſhews likewiſe, that thoſe who have credit with great men, or that are in authority, cannot employ it better, than in procuring the good of the church and of religion. II. In the next place we muſt obſerve, that *Nehemiah*, before he made his requeſt to the king, begged of God to touch the heart of that prince; he obtained his petition, and acknowledged that God had diſpoſed the king in his favour. This wiſe governor was no ſooner arrived at *Jeruſalem*, but he gave proof of his great prudence and intire confidence in God, and laboured ſucceſsfully in rebuilding the walls of the city, in ſpite of the obſtructions of their enemies. *Nehemiah*'s whole behaviour proves his ſincere piety, joined with great prudence and courage; and makes him a pattern for magiſtrates to follow. *Nehemiah*'s ſucceſs teaches us, that God bleſſes the deſigns that are formed for good ends; and that thoſe who labour to promote his glory, ſhould never be diſcouraged when they are oppoſed by the wicked.

CHAP. III.

IN this chapter we ſee how and in what order the walls of *Jeruſalem* were rebuilt.

REFLECTIONS.

IT appears from this chapter, that the *Jews* who dwelt at *Jeruſalem*, animated by the exhortations of their governor *Nehemiah*, laboured with great zeal and earneſtneſs in raiſing the walls of the city, every one who was able to be employed in it taking his part of the work. By this means *Jeruſalem*,

Jew, whoſe walls had been long overthrown, put on a new face, and was in ſome degree in a condition to defend itſelf againſt the enemy. This ſucceſs ſhould be aſcribed to the piety and prudent management of *Nehemiah*, whoſe endeavours God bleſſed; and to the good will which the people and rulers diſcovered on this occaſion.

CHAP. IV.

THE *Jews* neighbours laugh at their undertaking to rebuild the walls of *Jeruſalem*; but obſerving how the work went forwards, they were reſolved to attack them; whereupon *Nehemiah* implores the aſſiſtance of God, and puts himſelf in a ſtate of defence; exhorting the *Jews* to continue their work, and to fear nothing.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we have three principal reflections to make. The firſt is, That as the enemies of the *Jews* derided their undertaking, and did all they could to obſtruct it; ſo thoſe who labour for the glory of God, have reaſon to expect the contradiction of the wicked. II. That in all our dangers we ſhould have recourſe to the Lord, without neglecting our own labours and application, or any lawful means to ward off the evils which threaten us. Thus *Nehemiah*, when he found himſelf attacked, called upon the Lord, exhorted the people to fear nothing, and ſhewed by all he ſaid, that he put his whole confidence in God; but, at the ſame time, he gave neceſſary orders to prevent being ſurpriſed by their enemies, and uſed all the precautions which prudence required. III. We here find, that God bleſſes the undertakings of thoſe that truſt in him, and aſſiſts them againſt their enemies. This *Nehemiah* found by experience, ſince

God fruſtrated all the oppoſition of the neighbouring people, and the *Jews* happily finiſhed the work they had begun.

CHAP. V.

I. *NEHEMIAH* being informed that ſeveral of the *Jews* oppreſſed their brethren by uſury, aſſembles the magiſtrates; repreſents to thoſe that were guilty, the greatneſs of their ſin, and obliges them to reſtore what they had unjuſtly taken. II. And, to ſet a good example, he gives up part of the profits of his office, as governor; and contributes out of his own ſubſtance both towards building the walls of the city, and towards the ſupport of the neceſſitous.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory contained in this chapter, affords ſeveral excellent reflections. I. The firſt is, That it is a very great ſin to uſe extortion, and particularly to enrich ourſelves, and diſtreſs the neceſſitous, by ſelling, or lending to them, upon hard terms, in the time of dearth and ſcarcity. II. That thoſe who have been guilty of this ſin, ſhould reſtore what they have thus unjuſtly gotten, or even when they have exacted payment with too great rigour and ſeverity: whence it is evident, that reſtitution is an indiſpenſible duty, and that men are in conſcience, and before God, obliged to make reſtitution of many things, which by human laws they might legally poſſeſs. III. It appears from hence, that magiſtrates are obliged to prevent uſury and injuſtice, and to reſtrain, as *Nehemiah* did, thoſe who oppreſs the people, and force them to reſtore what they have got by wicked means. IV. The conduct of *Nehemiah* deſerves our moſt ſerious attention. During the twelve years

years that he was governor of *Jeruſalem*, he would not inſiſt upon the rights of his office, nor ſuffer his ſervants, and thoſe that were under him, to oppreſs any, but gave up his own dues, that he might not bring a burden upon the people in that troubleſome time; he gave even part of his own ſubſtance to ſupply the neceſſities of the public, and relieve private perſons: all which he did, as he himſelf obſerved, becauſe he feared God. This was a noble example of equity, piety, and diſintereſtedneſs, worthy to be imitated, eſpecially by magiſtrates, and by the rich and great; and this ſhews, how averſe we ought to be from oppreſſion and injuſtice, ſince, in caſe of neceſſity, we ought to give of our own, and even to diſpenſe with our right. The faithful diſcharge of theſe duties fills the mind with great confidence towards God, and enables a man to ſay, as *Nehemiah* ſaid, with ſo much faith and piety, *O my God! think upon me for good.*

CHAP. VI.

NEHEMIAH relates in this chapter, that notwithſtanding the obſtructions he met with from the enemies of the *Jews*, by means of falſe prophets, and even of thoſe of his own nation, he had always reſiſted them, and had completed the building of the walls of *Jeruſalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the account *Nehemiah* gives of what happened to him, during his government, we may take notice, that good people, and eſpecially thoſe that labour for the glory of God, are expoſed to many troubles, not only from their declared enemies, who attack them with open force, or by craft and calumny; but alſo from thoſe whom they look upon as their

brethren; and that even ſometimes unworthy miniſters of the Lord ſtir up theſe troubles againſt them. It appears likewiſe, from the wiſe, ſteady, and pious behaviour of *Nehemiah*, that thoſe who labour for the public good, ſhould never be ſtaggered by the threats and ſlanders of the wicked; and that, with the help of the Lord, who watches over them, they happily overcome all oppoſition.

CHAP. VII.

NEHEMIAH takes care for the ſecurity of *Jeruſalem*; numbers the *Jews* that were returned from the captivity, among whom ſome made conſiderable offerings, for the ſupply of the public neceſſities, and for the ſervice of God. This liſt is the ſame with that recorded in the ſecond chapter of *Ezra*, except in ſome few reſpects.

REFLECTIONS.

BESIDES the reflections which have been made upon the ſecond chapter of *Ezra*, relating to the liſts here ſet down, there are two things to be conſidered in this chapter: I. That to great piety, *Nehemiah* joined that prudence which was requiſite to ſecure *Jeruſalem*, and the *Jews*, at a time when they were expoſed to the inſults of their neighbours; which ſhews, that the care of maintaining good order, and preſerving public tranquillity, is worthy of the wiſeſt and moſt pious magiſtrates. II. We have likewiſe a beautiful example of piety and liberality, in the voluntary contribution of *Nehemiah*, of ſome of the chief men, and of ſeveral private perſons, towards the temple and the divine worſhip; and this example is the more inſtructive, as the *Jews* were then in a ſtate of poverty, and there were, at that time, but few rich men among them.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

ALL the *Jews* are gathered together to hear the reading and explanation of the law; upon which occaſion many tears are ſhed. *Nehemiah* and *Ezra* comfort them, and proclaim the feaſt of tabernacles, which was celebrated with a general joy.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE are informed in this chapter, that *Ezra* aſſembled all the people, men, women, and all that were capable of underſtanding, to hear the reading and explanation of the law; from whence we learn, how neceſſary it is to impart to the people the knowledge of the holy ſcripture, and for that purpoſe, to read and explain it publickly to all, without exception, as the Levites did upon this occaſion. II. The tears which the *Jews* ſhed, and their being ſo ſenſibly affected at the hearing of the law, ſhew the effect which the word of God produces upon well-diſpoſed perſons. III. It is ſaid, that *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, when they ſaw the people grieved and afflicted, comforted them, and exhorted them to rejoice in the Lord, who was their ſtrength. When the heart is humbled and affected with a godly ſorrow, then the word of God fails not to make a lively impreſſion; then it is we are in a condition to reliſh ſpiritual joy and conſolation, and to preſent ourſelves before God with confidence, as the *Jews* did, when they celebrated the feaſt of tabernacles. The orders that *Nehemiah* and *Ezra* gave concerning that feaſt, ſhew likewiſe, with how much exactneſs thoſe pious governors of the people of God obſerved all that was preſcribed by his law, and how zealouſly we ought all of us to be affected in the ſervice of the Lord, if we would ſerve him ourſelves, and induce

others to ſerve him, in a manner agreeable to his will.

CHAP. IX.

THE *Jews* keep a faſt, hear the reading of the law, and offer up a prayer to God, in which they adore his majeſty, acknowledge his goodneſs to their forefathers, the wonders he had done for them, the ſins they had many times committed, his patience and long ſuffering in bearing with them, and giving them warning, and the juſtice of his corrections. They likewiſe bleſs God for reſtoring them to their own country, though in a ſad and melancholy condition; and promiſe to keep his covenant faithfully for the future.

REFLECTIONS.

THE prayer contained in this chapter, which the *Jews* made to God, with ſolemn faſting, is one of the fineſt in all the ſcriptures. What is chiefly to be obſerved in this prayer is as follows: The *Jews* adore the power and majeſty of the moſt high God; ſolemnly acknowledge the mercies their nation had received from him in *Egypt*, in the wilderneſs, and in the land of *Canaan*, and his forbearance and long-ſuffering towards them; they confeſs their ſins and rebellions, and their abuſe of his favours; they own too, that God had juſtly chaſtiſed them, by ſending them into captivity, and ſubjecting them to ſtrange princes. Laſtly, They enter into a ſolemn engagement never more to return to their old ſins, but to keep inviolably the covenant which they then renewed with the Lord. We ſhould make a uſeful application to ourſelves of all the parts of this excellent prayer; read it often, and learn from thence to praiſe and adore God, to acknowledge the favours he beſtows upon us all in general,

neral, and on every one in particular; thoſe, eſpecially, whoſe circumſtances ſomewhat reſemble thoſe of the *Jews* at that time, and who have been made to paſs through divers trials and afflictions, ought from hence to learn, to confeſs their ſins and ingratitude, to celebrate his forbearance, to be more faithful to him for the time to come, and religiouſly to perform the conditions of his covenant.

CHAP. X.

THE *Jews* made a covenant with the Lord, and all of them engage by a writing, ſigned by the chief of them, and by a ſolemn oath, religiouſly to obſerve the covenant, and particularly to do and provide every thing neceſſary for the ſervice of God.

REFLECTIONS.

THE *Jews* gave very extraordinary proofs of their repentance and zeal, when, after a public faſt, they renewed, in an authentic manner, their covenant with God, and all of them, ſmall and great, engaged, for the time to come, to keep his commandments, and adhere inviolably to his ſervice. Such ſhould be the effect of religious acts: faſting, and ſolemn devotions, ſhould produce reformation of life, obedience to God's commands, and an unwearied application to his ſervice. The manner of the *Jews* renewing their covenant at this time, ſhould put us in mind of that covenant which all of us have made in baptiſm, and confirmed upon ſo many occaſions, and particularly at the Lord's Supper, by the moſt ſacred and inviolable promiſes. Let us remember, that this covenant obliges us to walk in the laws of our God, and to keep all his commandments; as we muſt all of us ſteadily do, if we would not be guilty

of perjury and infidelity; and as *Nehemiah*, the governor of *Jeruſalem*, and all the chief men, were the firſt to ſign and ſwear to the covenant, and all the people joined with them; ſo magiſtrates, and the miniſters of religion, ought to ſignalize their zeal in every thing that concerns the glory of God, that they may the better animate the people to the diſcharge of their duty. After the renewal of the covenant, the *Jews* took care to reſtore the orders and regulations made in the law of God, with reſpect to the ſanctification of the ſabbath, to the offerings, firſt fruits, tithes, and other matters relating to the ſervice that God had eſtabliſhed under the law. We ought not to be leſs zealous for the goſpel worſhip, and for every thing which may be, to ourſelves or others, a means of rendering to the Lord, not only the external ſervice he requires, but chiefly the internal worſhip, which conſiſts in loving him, and fearing him, and in ſanctifying ourſelves more and more, through the whole courſe of our lives.

CHAP. XII.

A Liſt of thoſe who dwelt at *Jeruſalem*, and in the country about it, in the time of *Nehemiah*. The rulers of the people dwelt in the city; and the people being divided into ten parts, the lot was caſt, and one part in ten ſettled in *Jeruſalem*, and the other nine parts were diſperſed in the cities of *Judah*.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is related in this chapter leads us to conſider, that herein was fulfilled what the prophets had foretold before the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, ſaying; *That the city of Judah ſhould be again inhabited*. This came to paſs under the prudent and pious governor *Nehemiah*; and herein the

Jews

Jews might ſee the truth of God's promiſes, and a proof of his great love towards them.

CHAP. XII.

THE firſt part of this chapter contains the names of the prieſts and Levites at that time. In the ſecond, we are told in what manner *Nehemiah* dedicated the walls of *Jeruſalem*, and appointed perſons to receive the firſt fruits, tenths, and other oblations of the people, which were ſet apart for the maintenance of the prieſts and Levites.

REFLECTIONS.

THE dedication of the walls of *Jeruſalem*, was an inſtance of the piety of *Nehemiah*, and of the reſt of the *Jews*. By this ceremony, by the ſacrifices they offered, and by the hymns of praiſe which they ſung upon the occaſion, they meant to aſcribe to God's mercy the reſtoration of their city and nation, and to ſecure his protection for the future. Zealous perſons take occaſion from every thing to expreſs their piety and gratitude, to render homage to the Lord for all the temporal advantages they enjoy; and wiſe and pious magiſtrates look upon his protection as the fountain of all the happineſs, and of all the ſecurity, both of cities and ſtates. Chriſtians ought to imitate the zeal of *Nehemiah*, and his people; and, like them, promote the good of religion, provide for the ſupport of the divine ſervice, and the advancement of God's glory, every one according to his power and abilities.

CHAP. XIII.

I. *NEHEMIAH*, when he had been twelve years in *Judea*, returns to *Perſia*, and then takes

takes a ſecond journey from *Perſia* to *Jeruſalem*, where he reforms ſeveral diſorders, which had been introduced in his abſence by *Eliaſhib* the prieſt's means. II. He ſeparates the ſtrangers from the *Jews*. III. He provides for the ſubſiſtence of the Levites, who, by reaſon of their poverty, had forſaken their office. He makes orders for preventing the profanation of the ſabbath, and marriages of the *Jews* with ſtrange women.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS is a chapter which ought to be particularly conſidered by thoſe who have the government of the church committed to them, and by Chriſtian magiſtrates. We here ſee with what zeal *Nehemiah* ſet himſelf to reform the abuſes that had crept in, while he was gone into *Perſia*, and to procure the obſervation of what God had commanded in the law, for the ſupport of the Levites. Nothing is more worthy the care of perſons in a public character, than what concerns religion. We may likewiſe from hence conclude, that it is a duty to provide for the maintenance of thoſe that perform divine ſervice, and to take care that things devoted to pious uſes ſhould be faithfully adminiſtred. What is particularly remarkable, is the zeal and reſolution which *Nehemiah* ſhewed againſt thoſe who kept not the ſabbath, and on that day brought to *Jeruſalem* burdens, and ſeveral wares, as well as againſt thoſe who had married ſtrange women. The governors of the church, and magiſtrates, ought to employ their authority to hinder the profanation of the Lord's Day, and to oppoſe with vigour every thing that is contrary to the law of God and good order. To animate and encourage them to the diſcharge of theſe duties, they would do well ſeriouſly to attend to theſe words, which this prudent and religious governor of *Jeruſalem* ſeveral

veral times repeated in this Book, and which are ſo full of piety and truſt in God: *Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds, that I have done for the houſe of my God, and for the offices thereof. Remember me, O my God! and ſpare me, according to the greatneſs of thy mercy.* Upright paſtors and magiſtrates, and in general all who have a true zeal for the houſe of God, and who labour heartily, and with a ſincere affection, in the edification of the church, may uſe the ſame words, and be aſſured, that God will remember them for their good, and that he will be the rewarder of their piety.

The end of the Book of NEHEMIAH.

THE

THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

ARGUMENT.

In this Book we ſee how God made uſe of queen Eſther, *who was a* Jeweſs, *and wife of king* Ahaſuerus, *to bring about the deliverance of the* Jews *who were in that king's dominions, and to do them good. It is thought what is related in this Book happened ſome time after the* Jews *were returned from the* Babyloniſh *captivity; and that this* Ahaſuerus, *who is called* Artaxerxes *in the additions to the Book of* Eſther, *was* Darius *the ſon of* Hyſtaſpes; *this prince, as well as others in that time, having different names in Holy Writ, and in profane hiſtory.*

CHAP. I.

KING *Ahaſuerus* makes a great feaſt for the chief nobles in his kingdom; and divorces his queen *Vaſhti*, becauſe when ſhe was ſent for to the feaſt ſhe refuſed to come.

RE-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. THE deſcription in this chapter of the grand entertainment which king *Ahaſuerus* gave to the nobles of his empire, and the princes of the provinces, ſhews the riches and ſplendor of that monarch; by which we may judge of the glory to which *Eſther* was exalted by becoming his queen. However, one may obſerve, in the deſcription of this feaſt, the prudence and temperance of *Ahaſuerus* and his court, ſince no one was required to drink more than he himſelf choſe. The ſentiments of this heathen prince condemn the ſhameful exceſs which the Chriſtians run into upon ſuch like occaſions. II. In the haughty and inſolent carriage of queen *Vaſhti*, and the diſgrace which ſhe fell into, we ſee what misfortunes men bring upon themſelves by their pride; and that the proud are brought low by Providence, while the humble are exalted. III. We muſt above all conſider, that God was pleaſed ſo to order it, that *Vaſhti* ſhould be divorced to raiſe *Eſther* in her ſtead; who was to be an inſtrument in God's hand to bring about the deliverance of the *Jews*. The laſt reflection to be made on this chapter is this: if *Ahaſuerus* and his counſellors judged the behaviour of *Vaſhti* the queen to be blame-worthy, and of dangerous conſequence, and that women ought to honour their huſbands, this duty is in the moſt expreſs manner required of Chriſtian women by the law of God; and in particular where St. *Paul* ſays, that *wives ſhould ſubmit themſelves unto their own huſbands, as unto the Lord; and that they ſhould not uſurp authority over them.*

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

I. KING *Ahaſuerus*, after he had divorced *Vaſhti* the queen, made choice of *Eſther*, a virgin, that was a *Jeweſs*, to be queen in her ſtead. II. Two of the officers of *Ahaſuerus* conſpire againſt him; and *Mordecai*, a near relation of *Eſther*, diſcovers the plot.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains two remarkable events: the firſt is, the choice which King *Ahaſuerus* made of *Eſther*, above all other women, to declare her queen in the room of *Vaſhti*. Providence ſo ordered things, that *Eſther*, who was a *Jeweſs*, might avert the misfortunes which were going to fall heavy upon the *Jews*. So that in this event we ſee the care God took, not only of *Eſther*, who was hereby greatly exalted, but particularly of the *Jews*, who were at that time in great numbers diſperſed throughout the empire of *Ahaſuerus*. God has in all ages raiſed up perſons to deliver his church from the dangers which threatned it. The other event, which likewiſe proved afterwards a means of the *Jews* deliverance, is the diſcovery which *Mordecai*, who was a *Jew*, and a near relation of queen *Eſther*, and had even been as a father to her, made of the conſpiracy which two officers of *Ahaſuerus* had formed againſt him. It is true, this important ſervice was at firſt forgot, and went unrewarded, but was noted in the public records. It clearly appeared, ſome time after, that the hand of the Lord was in all this; ſince the information *Mordecai* had given of this conſpiracy proved the occaſion of his preferment, of *Haman*'s ruin, who was the *Jews* enemy, and of the deliverance of that people. Providence diſpoſes things

a long

a long time beforehand for the execution of its deſigns. We have likewiſe, in the behaviour of *Mordecai*, a remarkable example of the fidelity that ſubjects owe to their princes.

CHAP. III.

HAMAN, who was a favourite of king *Ahaſuerus*, being provoked becauſe *Mordecai* did not proſtrate himſelf before him, formed a ſcheme to deſtroy him and all the *Jews*, and obtained of the king the neceſſary orders for that purpoſe.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE exaltation of *Haman* ſhews, that God permits ſometimes wicked men to arrive to the higheſt degree of honour and power, and that they abuſe their authority to murder the innocent; but that he ſoon brings them low, and expoſes them to ſhame and miſery. II. *Haman* conceived a mortal hatred againſt *Mordecai*, and all the *Jews*, becauſe *Mordecai* would not fall down before him; which *Mordecai* refuſed to do, not out of pride, but becauſe his religion would not permit him to pay *Haman* the honours he required. Nothing provokes ambitious men more than not ſubmitting to them; and their reſentment uſually produces hatred, and hurries them to the moſt cruel acts of vengeance. This is a warning to every body, and eſpecially to great men, to behave themſelves humbly in their exalted ſtations. III. We find that *Haman* did not ſhew his reſentment towards *Mordecai* alone, but reſolved to deſtroy all the *Jews*; and, to bring about his deſigns, he prejudiced *Ahaſuerus* againſt them by his calumnies, repreſenting them as a ſeditious people, and enemies to princes. This method the enemies of the church have ever taken to make it odious to kings; this method

ſucceeded

ſucceeded with *Haman:* he prevailed upon *Ahaſuerus* to publiſh a decree, ordering all the *Jews* to be put to death; the day for their utter extirpation was appointed, ſo that all that people were in the utmoſt diſtreſs. But we learn, by the ſequel of this hiſtory, that God ſuffered things to proceed to this extremity only the more effectually to confound *Haman*, and convince the *Jews*, in a more ſurpriſing manner, of his care and protection. However, *Ahaſuerus* gave credit too eaſily to *Haman*'s ſuggeſtions againſt the *Jews*, and by his credulity had like to have occaſioned many millions of innocent perſons to periſh. This ſhews how dangerous it is to liſten to detractors, and that we ought never to credit evil reports, till we have firſt enquired into the truth of them.

CHAP. IV.

I. MORDECAI, being informed of the decree that was given out to deſtroy all the *Jews*, is extremely afflicted at it, and cauſes notice thereof to be given to queen *Eſther*, that ſhe might endeavour to prevail upon the king to revoke the decree. II. *Eſther* was at firſt afraid to ſpeak to the king; but upon *Mordecai*'s repreſentation of the caſe, ſhe promiſed to do what ſhe could in behalf of the *Jews*, and ſent them word to faſt and pray for three days, to obtain of God ſucceſs in the deſign which ſhe had formed.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE condition to which *Mordecai* and the *Jews* were reduced, after the decree was publiſhed to deſtroy them all, ſhews, that the faithful are ſometimes given up into the hands of their enemies, in ſuch a manner, that their deſtruction ſeems unavoid-

unavoidable; but God does then find out means to deliver them, which they little expected. II. It is obſervable, that *Eſther*, when informed by *Mordecai* of the danger that threatned the *Jews*, was at firſt afraid to ſpeak to the king about it; but when *Mordecai* let her know, that if ſhe wanted courage to exert herſelf in behalf of her nation, God would puniſh her, and deliver his people by ſome other means; ſhe then reſolved, at the hazard of the king's diſpleaſure, to intercede for the *Jews*. We ſhould never refuſe to defend the cauſe of the innocent, and eſpecially to do what we can to advance the intereſt of the church; ſince every one ought to contribute towards it, in ſome caſes, even at the hazard of his life: and thoſe who have it in their power to promote it, and have not courage to do it, for fear of ſome misfortune, have reaſon to apprehend the divine judgments. Laſtly, As *Eſther*, before ſhe would preſent herſelf to the king, commanded all the *Jews* to faſt and pray with her, we muſt always have recourſe to the Lord in dangerous and important enterprizes, and join prayer with ſuch other means as are proper to be uſed for our deliverance, that God may bleſs us.

CHAP. V.

ESTHER the queen, after they had faſted and prayed for three days, preſents herſelf before *Ahaſuerus* her huſband; meets with a favourable reception, and begs him to come with *Haman* to two feaſts, which ſhe had prepared. In the mean time, *Haman*, enraged with *Mordecai*, prepares a gallows to hang him on.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us here obſerve, I. The courage and reſolution of *Eſther*, who, when ſhe had prepared herſelf by faſting and prayer, preſented herſelf before *Ahaſuerus*, intending to intercede for the *Jews*, though it was death to come into the king's preſence, without being ſent for. When our duty to God and the church is concerned, we ought to have no regard for ourſelves, but do what we are called to with our utmoſt ſtrength, whatever the ſucceſs of it be. II. *Ahaſuerus* kindly received the queen, though ſhe was at firſt afraid to appear before him. This was the effect of her faſting and prayer, joined with that of the other *Jews*. By prayer and humiliation we obtain ſucceſs of God, eſpecially when his glory is concerned; and he turns the hearts of men, and even of kings, in favour of thoſe who fear him and put their truſt in him. III. *Eſther* did not immediately aſk of the king what ſhe intended to requeſt of him, but deſired him to come, two days together, to a feaſt, with *Haman*. She behaved thus, out of prudence, that ſhe might with more eaſe prevail upon the king, and in his preſence confound *Haman*. Laſtly, We ſee that *Haman*, though in the height of all his glory, could taſte no ſolid ſatisfaction, becauſe *Mordecai* would not proſtrate himſelf before him; and to cure his uneaſineſs, he prepares a gallows to hang him upon. Thoſe who are in the moſt exalted ſtation, are not always ſo happy as men imagine; they have generally ſome ſecret trouble which gnaws and devours them; and indeed a little matter will ſour all their proſperity: this is eſpecially the lot of proud and ambitious men; their pride is their puniſhment, when they have the mortification to ſee themſelves not honoured as they expect, which makes them give way

way to malice and revenge. But when the wicked ſeem to be moſt firmly rooted, and oppreſs good men without control, their ruin is then near at hand, and they themſelves hurry it on by their crimes.

CHAP. VI.

KING *Ahaſuerus*, not being able to ſleep, called for the publick records, where they read to him the paſſage which mentioned the conſpiracy of two of his officers, that *Mordecai* had diſcovered. The king, to reward the ſervices *Mordecai* had done him, cauſed him to be led round the city in very great ſtate by *Haman* himſelf, the enemy of the *Jews*, and the chief perſon in the kingdom, who that very day was come to deſire *Mordecai* to be put to death. *Haman*, after he had attended *Mordecai*, returned home full of grief.

REFLECTIONS.

WE cannot ſufficiently admire the ways of Providence in the hiſtory recorded in this chapter. At the time the *Jews* were going to be deſtroyed, and the very day *Mordecai* was to die, God ſo ordered, that *Ahaſuerus* could not ſleep, and cauſed the publick records to be read to him, and that place in particular where the important ſervice which *Mordecai* had done him, in giving information of a plot formed againſt his life by two of his officers. By this means, that which *Mordecai* had done, and was forgot, as it generally happens with great men, was rewarded at a time when it produced much greater good to him, and all the nation of the *Jews*, than if he had been immediately rewarded. God, in his unſearchable wiſdom, ſometimes ſuffers things to proceed to that extremity, that he ſeems to have for-

ſaken thoſe that fear him; but, at a convenient ſeaſon, he comes in to their aſſiſtance, and when it is needful, diſpoſes all events in their favour. We have here another ſurpriſing inſtance of the interpoſition of Providence, when we ſee *Haman* coming, that very day, to *Ahaſuerus*, to procure an order to hang *Mordecai*, which would have been infallibly granted; and ſo blinded with pride, that he imagined he was ſpeaking for himſelf, when *Ahaſuerus* aſked him, what honours ſhould be conferred on the man whom the king was pleaſed to diſtinguiſh in an extraordinary manner: without knowing it, he invented triumphs for *Mordecai*, who was his averſion, and whoſe death he was then come to procure, and was forced to attend him through the city; and ſo had the ſorrow and ſhame to become, when he leaſt thought of it, and contrary to his own intention, the inſtrument of the exaltation, and of the glory of that perſon whoſe deſtruction he had reſolved: and *Mordecai* received the greateſt honours, the very day a gibbet was to have been his portion. This unforeſeen and ſurpriſing event, with the effects it produced, both with regard to *Haman* and the *Jews*, moſt undeniably prove, that God, in his infinite wiſdom, and by his power, was the diſpoſer of it, to deliver *Mordecai* and the *Jews*, and to the confuſion of their cruel oppreſſors.

CHAP. VII.

AHASUERUS, going with *Haman* to a ſecond banquet, which *Eſther* the queen had invited him to, ſhe intreats him to revoke the decree he had made, by *Haman*'s inſtigation, to deſtroy the *Jews*. The king, enraged with *Haman*, commands him to be hanged on the gallows which he had prepared for *Mordecai*.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we ſee the ſudden fall of *Haman*. Though he was a favourite of the king, he was accuſed by *Eſther*, who convinced the king of the injuſtice and cruelty of this enemy of the *Jews*. *Haman*, knowing himſelf guilty, could ſay nothing in his own defence; and the king was ſo inraged with him, that he was not only diſgraced, but even condemned to death, and hanged upon the gallows which he had ſet up for *Mordecai*. Theſe are new proofs of the juſtice of God's providence; and evidently ſhew the vanity of human greatneſs, and how God confounds and puniſhes the proud, ſlanderous, cruel, and bloody man; and takes particular care of his church, and in general of all the innocent. Laſtly, This example ſhews very plainly, that God, who is juſt, generally puniſhes the wicked, making the evil they had prepared for others, fall upon their own heads.

CHAP. VIII.

AHASUERUS gives *Mordecai* the eſtate and employments of *Haman*, revoking the decree which he had given againſt the *Jews*, and diſpatches letters, at the intreaty of *Eſther*, throughout his kingdom, giving them leave to defend themſelves againſt their enemies; which occaſioned great joy among the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to obſerve upon this chapter is, that not only *Haman* was puniſhed, and the *Jews* delivered from the intended maſſacre, but that *Mordecai* took his place, and was exalted to the ſame honours as this enemy of God before enjoyed,

and that the *Jews* were even authorized to defend themſelves againſt all that ſhould attempt to hurt them. The queen deſired of the king, that the *Jews* might have liberty to ſecure themſelves, by taking arms. This precaution was neceſſary, becauſe ſhe foreſaw, that after the orders given by *Haman*, the *Jews* would be attacked in ſeveral quarters, which accordingly came to paſs. By this means, the alarm the *Jews* were in was diſperſed and turned into joy; and this wonderful deliverance tended likewiſe to the glory of God, ſince it is remarked, that upon this ſeveral embraced the *Jewiſh* religion. We here ſee the truth of what is ſaid in ſcripture, that God *raiſes the poor out of the duſt, and ſets them with princes.* Let us make this further obſervation, that if the Lord permits the juſt to be afflicted, and ſometimes ſeems to deliver them into the hand of the wicked, he reſtores them peace and proſperity. Theſe are powerful motives to induce us to truſt in God, and to live always in innocence, and then we ſhall always ſhare in his protection.

CHAP. IX.

THE *Jews*, in conſequence of the leave granted them by *Ahaſuerus*, gather together to defend themſelves againſt their enemies, and ſlay a great number of them upon the very ſame day which had been marked out by *Haman* for their deſtruction. After this is over, they keep a ſolemn feaſt, and *Eſther* and *Mordecai* appoint that day to be kept for the future in memory of that deliverance. This feaſt was called the Feaſt of Purim.

CHAP. X.

THE king exalts *Mordecai* to the greateſt honours, and *Mordecai* makes uſe of his credit to procure the good of his nation.

REFLECTIONS *on chap.* IX, *and* X.

ON the two laſt chapters we may make the three following reflections. I. That the *Jews*, in ſlaying their enemies, acted very juſtly; not only becauſe they were engaged in the juſt and neceſſary defence of themſelves, but likewiſe becauſe the king had given them leave and authority to ſtand upon their guard againſt thoſe that ſhould endeavour to take away their lives, notwithſtanding the revoking of the edict which *Haman* had procured againſt the *Jews*. Among thoſe who were ſlain by the *Jews*, were the ſons of *Haman*, who were even hanged after their death; which was a token of the curſe of God upon that cruel and bloody man. II. The ſecond reflection relates to the truth and certainty of the hiſtory contained in the Book of *Eſther*. The certainty of it appears from what is ſaid in the tenth chapter, that theſe things were recorded in the chronicles of the kings of the *Medes* and *Perſians*; but chiefly by the appointment of the Feaſt of Purim, which was ordered by *Eſther* and *Mordecai*, and has been obſerved ever ſince, and is even kept at this day by the *Jews*. Laſtly, That which is ſaid at the end of the Book, that *Mordecai* was the ſecond after king *Ahaſuerus*; and that he procured the good of his nation, and ſought the proſperity of his people, is a leſſon to great men, and thoſe that are in credit and authority, that if God has raiſed

them, the beſt uſe they can make of their authority is, to employ it to ſupport the innocent, protect the church, advance the intereſts of religion, and promote the glory of God.

Here ends the Book of *Eſther*, and the hiſtorical Books of the Old Teſtament.

The end of the Book of ESTHER.

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THE

THE BOOK OF JOB.

ARGUMENT.

Job, *who was a man illuſtrious for his piety, and for his patience, lived about the time that the children of* Iſrael *were in* Egypt. *There are three things contained in this Book:* I. *The hiſtory of* Job's *afflictions.* II. *The diſputes between him and his friends, upon this queſtion,* Whether God afflicts good men in this world? *and* whether adverſity is a proof of his wrath and diſpleaſure? III. *The end of* Job's *afflictions, and the proſperity which ſucceeded. This Book, which is writ in a figurative ſtyle, contains ſeveral excellent inſtructions; and we are there to obſerve particularly what ſentiments the men in his age entertained concerning the principal points and moſt important duties of Religion. The teſtimony which God, by the prophet* Ezekiel, *bears to* Job, *ranking him with men of the greateſt piety, ſuch as* Noah *and* Daniel; *and what the Apoſtle St.* James *ſays of him, confirms the truth of this Hiſtory, and engages us to conſider what is contained in it with the greater attention.*

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

THE firſt chapter teaches us three things: I. The great piety and proſperity of *Job*. II. How God, to try him, and to confute the calumnies of Satan, ſuffered him to be deprived of all his goods and his children. III. His reſignation under all theſe afflictions.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. THE firſt reflection to be made on this chapter relates to *Job*'s great piety. This we have a convincing proof of in the teſtimony of God himſelf, when he ſays of *Job*, that he was *a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eſchewed evil; and that there was none like him in the earth.* His piety likewiſe appears in the care he took to pray, and offer ſacrifices in behalf of his children. From hence we may conclude, that there have been, in the moſt diſtant ages, perſons endued with great piety; and that it is the duty of parents to pray for their children, and to inſpire their families with the fear of God. II. The next reflection relates to the great riches and proſperity of this holy man, and the change which happened in his condition. He was the richeſt man in all the country where he dwelt, but was at once deprived of his ſubſtance, his children, and all that was dear to him, and ſaw himſelf reduced to the moſt deplorable condition. This very remarkable inſtance teaches us, that thoſe who fear God, do ſometimes enjoy great proſperity, and the bleſſings of this life; but that God does likewiſe, when he pleaſes, deprive them of theſe bleſſings, and reduce them to a ſtate of great adverſity; and therefore, that afflictions are not always a proof of God's wrath. III. What God ſaid to Satan proves

proves theſe two things: one is, That neither the devil nor man can hurt good people, any further than God permits them: and the other, That when God expoſes his children to temptations and ſufferings, he does it to try them, and to manifeſt their faith and piety. Laſtly, The manner in which *Job* received all his misfortunes, deſerves to be very particularly conſidered: in the midſt of his troubles he expreſſed the moſt ſurprizing conſtancy and reſignation, and even bleſſed God in the moſt deplorable condition. Thus ſhould we glorify God by our patience; receive without murmuring the moſt ſevere and afflicting diſpenſations of Providence; bleſſing God in adverſity, as well as in proſperity; and ſaying, upon all occaſions, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; bleſſed be the name of the Lord.*

CHAP. II.

I. AS Satan ſtill continued to accuſe *Job*, God permits him to ſmite him with a very grievous and painful diſeaſe. II. *Job* receives this new trial with conſtancy, and reproves his wife for urging him to repine. III. *Job*'s friends come to viſit him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE following reflections ſhould be made upon the three parts of this chapter: I. That God, to confound Satan, and give full proof of *Job*'s ſincerity, permitted Satan to ſmite that holy man with a ſtrange and moſt painful diſeaſe, after he had loſt his goods and his children. God often viſits thoſe he loves with the moſt ſevere afflictions; which he does to try them, and to give them an opportunity to ſhew the ſincerity of their affections. II. In the ſecond part of this chapter we are to take notice, on one hand, of the behaviour of *Job*'s wife, who, inſtead

inſtead of encouraging and comforting him, tempted him to murmur againſt God, and curſe him; and on the other, the wonderful conſtancy of *Job*, who always preſerved his integrity, and ſaid to his wife, *What! Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive evil?* Here let us conſider, that perſons united by marriage, or otherwiſe, are guilty of a great ſin when they do not endeavour to edify one another, and mutually exhort each other to holineſs; and that, when it pleaſes God to afflict us, it behoves us humbly to ſubmit to his will, and acquieſce in all his diſpenſations; knowing that evil as well as good proceed from him, and that afflictions are not leſs uſeful to us than proſperity and ſucceſs. III. The example of the three friends of *Job*, who came to viſit him in his adverſity, teaches us, that it is our duty to be concerned for perſons in affliction; and, as St. *Paul* ſays, *to mourn with thoſe that mourn*, and to do all we can to comfort them.

CHAP. III.

JOB, under the load of his ſufferings, curſes the day of his birth, wiſhes for death, and complains that God had let him live to endure ſo many afflictions.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſhould look upon the complaints that *Job* makes in this chapter, as an effect of the violence of his ſufferings, and as one of thoſe infirmities, which perſons even of ſincere piety are liable to; which ſhews the great infirmity of the fleſh, and how much we ought to be upon our guard, that our infirmities do not drive us into impatience and murmurings. *Job* ſaid, it would have been better for him

him not to have been born, or to have died before his adverſity; but this he ſaid in the exceſs of his grief. He was not ignorant, that if God lets ſome men live in extreme affliction, we ought not to imagine, thoſe perſons would be happier to be dead. He knew, and he acknowledges it in this Book, that the goodneſs of God is infinite, and his wiſdom infallible; that he does nothing without good reaſon, founded on our good; and that the condition he places us in, is always that which is moſt convenient for us. It is therefore our duty to ſubmit ourſelves with reſignation and chearfulneſs to every thing that it ſhall pleaſe God to bring upon us; eſpecially, if we conſider, that inſtead of uſing us with too much ſeverity, he never puniſhes us ſo much as our ſins deſerve; and if our weakneſs ſhould lead us to murmur, and we do not immediately diſcover the reaſons of God's proceedings with us, we muſt check thoſe motions of impatience, and bear our croſs as long as it ſhall pleaſe God to lay it upon us, waiting till he thinks fit to put an end to our afflictions.

CHAP. IV.

ELIPHAZ, the firſt of *Job*'s friends, reproves him for grieving ſo exceſſively himſelf, who had formerly preached patience to others in affliction: He repreſents God as afflicting the wicked, but not good men: He relates a viſion which he had ſeen, wherein God had convinced him of his juſtice, and of the meanneſs and corruption of human nature. By this diſcourſe, *Eliphaz* meant to perſuade *Job*, that God afflicted him becauſe of his ſins; and that the piety he had expreſſed during his proſperity was not ſincere; and that he was not ſufficiently inſtructed in his own meanneſs and unworthineſs.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THE principal reflection we ought to make upon the diſcourſe of *Eliphaz*, is, that although it be true, in general, that the innocent never periſh, and that God afflicts men for their ſins; yet *Eliphaz* was to blame for concluding from thence, that *Job*'s virtue had not been ſincere; ſince God does alſo ſend misfortunes to good people. Wherefore, it would be judging very raſhly and haſtily, to believe that men are wicked, or hypocrites, only becauſe they are afflicted; on the contrary, juſtice and piety require us to judge charitably of them; eſpecially, when their lives have been innocent, as *Job*'s had been. The viſion that *Eliphaz* relates here, is very remarkable, and full of inſtruction. God often revealed himſelf to the men of thoſe times, by viſions and by dreams, and by a voice. Thus did he reveal himſelf to *Eliphaz*, to teach him that God is perfectly righteous in all his works; and that man ought to acknowledge, that he is in God's ſight nothing but a weak and corrupt creature.

CHAP. V.

I. ELIPHAZ treats of the judgments of God upon the wicked, and their poſterity: Upon which occaſion he ſays many very excellent things, repreſenting the power, juſtice, and goodneſs of the Lord; and in particular, his uſual method of confounding the wicked, and delivering the righteous. II. He ſpeaks of the uſefulneſs of God's corrections; exhorts *Job* to improve by thoſe which God had viſited him with, and to acknowledge his ſins; giving him hopes, that by this means he ſhould be delivered from his misfortunes, and reſtored to his former condition.

REFLECTIONS.

THE inſtructions contained in this chapter are the following: I. That though the wicked proſper, the judgments of God purſue them, and their happineſs does not laſt long. What *Eliphaz* here ſays upon this ſubject is very true, but his application of it to *Job*, is wrong. II. That God, in his unbounded wiſdom and power, is the diſpoſer of all events, and eſpecially of thoſe that happen to men, diſpenſing them with perfect righteouſneſs, and great goodneſs; inſomuch that, ſooner or later, the wicked are confounded, and the righteous delivered. This every day's experience confirms; which ſhould be a powerful motive to forſake ſin, and engage us to put our whole truſt in God alone. III. That it is a great happineſs for men to be corrected; and therefore, that we ſhould chearfully ſubmit to afflictions, as *Eliphaz* expreſſes in theſe remarkable words: *Happy is the man whom God correcteth: Therefore deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Almighty; for he maketh ſore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole.* From hence it follows, that the courſe we have to take in all our miſeries, is to humble ourſelves before God, to make a right uſe of his corrections, and to have recourſe to him. Thoſe who do this may be ſecure, as it is obſerved at the end of this chapter, that God will deliver them from the afflictions and dangers they are expoſed to, and load them with his favours, after he has tried them by ſufferings.

CHAP. VI.

IN this chapter *Job*, in reply to what *Eliphaz* had ſaid, juſtifies his complaints by the violence of his ſufferings; and ſtill wiſhes for death.

II. He

II. He complains of his friends, who, inſtead of comforting him, only reproached him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE deſcription *Job* here gives of the greatneſs of his misfortunes, and his endeavour to juſtify the complaints he had given way to, ſhew, that even thoſe whom God loves, and who fear him, may be reduced to a very deplorable ſtate, and overwhelmed with grief and ſufferings; and that in ſuch a condition, through human weakneſs, they may fall into impatience. Though theſe are infirmities which God pardons in his children, yet it is our duty to endeavour to overcome them, and not to complain too much in our ſevereſt afflictions. II. *Job*'s complaint of *Eliphaz* and his friends was very juſt; ſince, inſtead of comforting him, they did nothing but reproach him, and judge him, in a very uncharitable manner. This teaches us always to judge favourably of perſons in affliction, and above all, of ſuch as have been remarkable for their piety; not to increaſe their grief by uncharitable cenſures, but rather to treat them with tenderneſs and compaſſion, and to endeavour to alleviate their misfortunes, and to uſe all poſſible means to comfort them.

CHAP. VII.

I. JOB deſcribes the miſeries of human life, and particularly the ſeverity of the afflictions he himſelf endured. II. He intreats God to have compaſſion on him, and to ſpare his weakneſs; he repreſents the horror and uneaſineſs he was expoſed to, and implores God's mercy, and the pardon of his ſins.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we are reminded of the vanity and ſhortneſs of human life, and how many miſeries man is expoſed to in this world. This truth *Job* teaches us, when he ſays, *That there is a kind of warfare appointed to man upon earth*; and when he ſets before us his own example, and the greatneſs of his ſufferings. Now, if ſuch is our condition in this world, and *Job*, a man ſo holy, and ſo acceptable to God, was treated thus, we ought not to ſet our hearts too much upon things here below, nor be ſurpriſed if God expoſes us to divers afflictions: we ſhould rather conſider, that he does all in goodneſs and wiſdom; that he ſends afflictions to make us ſenſible of the vanity of this life, and to wean us from the world; that therefore it is our duty humbly to ſubmit to his will; to acknowledge our unworthineſs, to pray him to conſider our weakneſs, and to pardon our ſins; and to ſay upon this occaſion with *Job*, *What is man, that thou ſhouldeſt magnify him, and that thou ſhouldeſt ſet thy heart upon him! I have ſinned, what ſhall I do, O thou Preſerver of men? Pardon my tranſgreſſion, and take away my ſin.*

CHAP. VIII.

BILDAD, the ſecond of *Job*'s friends, condemns his complaints; affirms, that ſince God is juſt, the misfortunes that had befallen *Job* and his children were the puniſhment of their ſins. He proves, by the experience of all ages, that God is uſed to puniſh the wicked and hypocrites; and, on the contrary, to bleſs good men. By all this, *Bildad* endeavours to make *Job* confeſs, that he had drawn theſe evils upon himſelf by his ſins.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to learn from this chapter is, I. That God is juſt and wiſe in all his diſpenſations towards the children of men; that he does them no wrong when he afflicts them; and that they have no reaſon to complain of his dealings with them. II. That God is reconciled with thoſe who ſeek him, who apply to him for mercy, and are men of uprightneſs and integrity. III. That in all times wicked men and hypocrites have felt the effects of his wrath, and been diſappointed in their expectations. Theſe are certain truths, and inſtructions which we ought carefully to remember, as very proper to make us live in the fear of God, and ſupport us in time of adverſity. Nevertheleſs, we muſt not believe, that the righteous are never afflicted; and though what *Bildad* ſays in this chapter be true; yet he was haſty and raſh in his judgment, when he concluded, that *Job* was not acceptable to God, becauſe he was in adverſity; ſince God often expoſes good people to very great evils for their trial, and to make them examples to others; but, whatever befals them, *Bildad*'s remark is juſt, *That the Almighty never caſts away the upright man.*

CHAP. IX.

JOB, in this chapter, replies to his friend *Bildad*; aſſents to the truth of what he had ſaid concerning the juſtice of God; acknowledges, that God is infinitely wiſe; that he has an uncontroulable authority over mankind; and that his power, majeſty and juſtice, appear in all his works; he confeſſes, that he cannot juſtify himſelf before God, and has recourſe to his mercy. He maintains, however, that God afflicts the righteous as well as the wicked,

wicked, and ſometimes ſuffers bad men to enjoy proſperity; and declares, that were he to ſink under the weight of God's afflicting hand, he ſhould not think that God had uſed him with too much ſeverity.

REFLECTIONS.

JOB teaches us in this chapter, that man cannot be juſtified before God; that if the Lord ſhould enter into judgment with him, he could not *anſwer him one of a thouſand*; that the power of God is infinite; and that ſinful men, however treated, have no right to complain; but muſt all be condemned in his preſence, and implore his mercy. What *Job* here ſays, ſhews, that though he inſiſted he was not a wicked man, he did not pretend to be juſt before God. We ought all of us to entertain the ſame thoughts, continually and ſeriouſly reflect upon all theſe truths, which *Job* lays down in this chapter, and thereby animate ourſelves to the fear of God, ſubmitting to his will, and putting our truſt in him. In particular, what *Job* obſerves concerning the ſtate of good and bad men in this world, teaches us to judge aright of the good and evil of life, and to acquieſce in the diſpenſations of God's providence, whether he viſit good men with adverſity, or ſuffer the wicked to enjoy great proſperity.

CHAP. X.

I. JOB continues to complain of the great evils he endured, and beſeeches God not to regard his ſins. II. He begs of God, who had made him, and given him life, to grant him ſome eaſe and relaxation from extreme ſuffering, before his departure out of this world.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we have proofs both of *Job*'s piety, and of his weakneſs. His piety appears in his humble addreſs to God, and confeſſion, that the Almighty Being, from whom he received his life, and all things, was perfectly *righteous in all his ways*. In this reſpect we ſhould imitate *Job*, acknowledging that God is our Creator; that as he gave us our life, he may diſpoſe of us as he pleaſes; and that as we are ſinners, and guilty before him, he can do us no wrong when he afflicts us. But we meet likewiſe with marks of *Job*'s weakneſs and infirmity, when we hear him complaining and ſaying, that it would have been better he had never been born. *Job*'s expreſſions were certainly extravagant; ſince, whatever mens ſufferings are, God has always wiſe and juſt reaſons for giving them life; but the violence of his troubles made *Job* ſay things which he would not have ſaid in any other condition. This is a leſſon to us, always to poſſeſs our ſouls in patience, that our ſufferings may never provoke us to murmur. All that we can ſafely do when we are afflicted, is to pray to God to conſider our weakneſs, and to give us ſome eaſe in our afflictions.

CHAP. XI.

ZOPHAR, the third of *Job*'s friends, blames him for ſpeaking of God, as if he had afflicted him wrongfully; ſets before him the greatneſs, wiſdom, power, and juſtice of God; aſſures him, that if he would apply to God by prayer and repentance, he would put an end to his afflictions, and reſtore him to his former ſtate of proſperity.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three things to be obſerved in this chapter. I. That *Zophar* condemns *Job*'s manner of complaining; and, to this end, reminds him, that God is ſupremely righteous in all that he does. Though *Zophar* condemned *Job* with too great ſeverity, yet what he ſaid was in the main true; and teaches us, that we ſhould confeſs in all things the power and juſtice of God, and adore his providence, whoſe ways are wonderful, and his judgments full of equity. Theſe conſiderations will convince us, that inſtead of murmuring when we are expoſed to ſuffering, we ſhould, with humility, acknowledge, that he is juſt in his judgments, and even exerciſes patience and long-ſuffering towards us. II. When *Zophar* aſſures *Job*, that if he turned unto the Lord he ſhould find himſelf reſtored to his former ſtate of proſperity; what he ſays is founded on this moſt certain truth, that God is found of thoſe who ſeek him with humility, and that when ſinners confeſs and forſake their ſins, his anger is appeaſed. Laſtly, We learn from the diſcourſe of *Zophar*, that a good man is always ſteady and full of confidence, fears nothing, reſts ſecurely, and lies down without being terrified by any one, or ſtaggered by any event. By this we ſee, that nothing but a ſincere piety, and confidence in God, can render a man happy in this world, and make him paſs his life in tranquility, and without fear.

CHAP. XII.

JOB, in anſwer to what *Zophar* had ſaid concerning the infinite wiſdom and majeſty of God, confeſſes, that God gives ſuch evident proofs of his power and wiſdom in the government of the world,

that no one can well avoid taking notice of it. This he illuſtrates by ſeveral examples taken from nature, and from the lot of men in particular, who are ſometimes in proſperity, and ſometimes in adverſity; God exalting ſome, and abaſing others, as it ſeemeth beſt to his infinite wiſdom.

REFLECTIONS.

IT appears from this diſcourſe of *Job*, that though in his complaints of the greatneſs of his afflictions, he exceeded the juſt bounds, yet he was notwithſtanding convinced of the power and juſtice of God. This is the doctrine he lays down in this chapter, where he teaches, that in his hand is the ſoul of every thing that lives; that with him is ſtrength and wiſdom; that no one can reſiſt him; that he humbles the moſt powerful; that, when he pleaſes, he defeats the wiſdom of the wiſe, and diſpoſes of all men as he thinks fit, even of kings, and of whole nations. The uſe we ought to make of theſe truths is, to meditate upon them ſeriouſly, that we may learn to fear God, to truſt in him, to be patient in adverſity, and to reſign ourſelves to his will in all things.

CHAP. XIII.

I. JOB, after what he had ſaid in the preceding chapter, concerning the almighty power and unerring juſtice of God in all that he does, reproves his friends for ſpeaking wrong of the proceedings of God towards the wicked, and towards the righteous. II. He expreſſes a firm truſt in God, and prays him to ſpare him, and to take pity of his weakneſs.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

JOB's anſwer to his friends, and what he here ſays concerning the majeſty of God, and the righteouſneſs of his proceedings towards men, ſhews very plainly, that if *Job* complained too bitterly of his afflictions, his complaints were the effect of his infirmity, and did not proceed from an evil principle. We are here furniſhed with excellent proofs of *Job*'s piety, of his hope and confidence in God, and of his profound humility. He humbly acknowledges the majeſty of God, and that he himſelf is as nothing, and beſeeches him only to give him ſome comfort and relaxation in his miſeries. In the ſharpeſt afflictions we ought always to hope in God, and to beſeech him not to correct us in his anger; but to have compaſſion on our weakneſs, and to remember that we are but duſt and aſhes before him.

CHAP. XIV.

THIS chapter is a lively repreſentation of the frailty of human life, and the miſeries to which man is ſubject in this world, and the condition he is reduced to by death. *Job* gives himſelf as an example of thoſe miſeries; and begs God to have compaſſion on him, and particularly not to mark his ſins.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains a deſcription of the vanity of our life. We here ſee that this life is ſhort, and attended with many miſeries; that we do not enjoy any certain happineſs in it; and that it muſt at laſt end in death. Theſe are truths which no one can be ignorant of; and the uſe we ought to make of them is, I. Not to be too

fond of life, or of the things of this world, which are all vain and tranſitory. II. To moderate our joys in proſperity, and to ſuffer adverſity with patience. III. To intreat the Lord to aſſiſt us while we are in this periſhable life, and above all, to pardon our ſins. Laſtly, We ought to praiſe God that we have in the Goſpel, and in the ſure and certain hope of the reſurrection, ſtrong conſolation, and a ſure remedy againſt the vanity of this life, and againſt death itſelf. And our great care ſhould be to improve the time, and others means that God has given us, whilſt we are in this world, to free ourſelves from the miſeries to which we are ſubject here below, and from death itſelf, and to ſecure to ourſelves the poſſeſſion of true riches, and a better life after this.

CHAP. XV.

ELIPHAZ ſpeaks a ſecond time, and accuſes *Job* of impeaching the juſtice of God, and talking in a manner inconſiſtent with true piety. He aſſerts, that if the wicked proſper for a time, God puniſhes them even in this life, inaſmuch as they have never any reſt in their conſciences, and their happineſs is not laſting. It is obſerved, that what *Eliphaz* ſays in this chapter is moſt commonly true; but it does not follow from hence, that all thoſe who ſuffer are wicked, nor that *Job* was a bad man becauſe he underwent extraordinary afflictions.

REFLECTIONS.

THE advice which *Eliphaz* gives *Job* in this diſcourſe teaches us, I. That we muſt never murmur againſt God, nor find fault with his ways, whatever befals us; and that ſince man is corrupt and defiled, he ought not to complain of the evils he

he ſuffers, nor pretend to juſtify himſelf before God. II. *Eliphaz* here deſcribes, with great ſtrength, the terrors of the wicked, and the troubles of an evil conſcience. He tells us, that the wicked are as a woman in travail all the days of their life; that they are in perpetual fear; that they never enjoy any ſolid peace; and that their proſperity quickly paſſes away. This is a truth which is confirmed by the ſenſe of all men, and the experience of all ages; which ought to give us a great dread of ſin, as it expoſes us to ſo many miſeries; and ſhould make us live a godly life, which alone can procure us inward peace and tranquility of conſcience, and ſecure to us everlaſting happineſs, by making us acceptable in God's ſight.

CHAP. XVI.

I. JOB replies, and reproves his friends for their hard-heartedneſs; and tells them, that if they were in his condition he would comfort them, inſtead of increaſing their affliction. II. He again deſcribes his ſufferings, and ſays, that God had overwhelmed him with affliction. Laſtly, He ſolemnly proteſts, that he was not conſcious to himſelf of any particular crimes; and calls God to witneſs his innocence.

REFLECTIONS.

JOB reproaches his friends for their unkindneſs, telling them they were miſerable comforters; and that if they were in his ſtead he would not talk to them as they had done to him. This teaches us, that we ſhould inſult no man under misfortunes, nor add to mens afflictions by treating them roughly, or judging of them uncharitably; but that we ought rather to comfort them as much as we can, and bear with

with their infirmities. As for the complaints that *Job* makes in this chapter, and his proteſtations of innocence, we muſt not interpret what he ſays ſo ſtrictly as to imagine he thought himſelf exempt from all ſin, or pretended to juſtify himſelf before God: But as his friends had accuſed him of bringing upon himſelf, by his ſins, all the miſeries he endured, he meant only, that he was not guilty of thoſe ſins by which wicked and ungodly men expoſe themſelves to the divine vengeance. Every one, who ſincerely fears God, ſhould be able to ſay as much; and this ſhould make us ſenſible how happy thoſe are who live in uprightneſs, and can, with all humility and lowlineſs of heart, as every good man muſt do, call God to witneſs their ſincerity, in endeavouring to ſerve God, and to do his will.

CHAP. XVII.

JOB ſtill complains of his friends for condemning him; and declares, that in the deplorable condition he was then in, he expected nothing but death.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things to be conſidered in this chapter: I. That it is a great aggravation of affliction to ſee thoſe who ought to pity and comfort us, heighten our grief by their reproaches, and by ſuch expreſſions as tend rather to ſtagger our faith, as *Job*'s friends did to him. Thoſe who behave in this manner towards men under misfortunes, are guilty of a great breach of juſtice and charity. II. The other thing to be conſidered is, that *Job* ſpeaks as if death was the only comfort and deliverance he expected. This way of ſpeaking argued ſome degree of weakneſs; but it would be wrong to

to judge of *Job*'s real ſentiments, by what he uttered in the exceſs of his grief. He declares, in ſeveral places of this Book, that in all his calamities he always hoped in God. This ſhould teach us to endeavour after ſuch ſtrength of faith, and ſuch ſteadineſs in the fear of God, that we may not be in danger of letting ſlip any unguarded expreſſions, inconſiſtent with that ſubmiſſion which we owe to the diſpenſations of Providence; and may be always animated with ſuch a degree of confidence, as may be ſufficient to ſupport us under the greateſt afflictions, and even in death itſelf.

CHAP. XVIII.

BILDAD ſpeaks a ſecond time; accuſes *Job* of preſumption; and ſhews him that God is uſed to ſend down his judgments upon the wicked and their poſterity.

REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH *Bildad* was certainly wrong in applying to *Job* what he ſays in this chapter, the doctrine he here lays down is nevertheleſs true; ſince, as he obſerves, if wicked men enjoy proſperity for a time, it ſoon paſſes away; and God diſplays his judgments upon them, their children, and their eſtates, and all that belong to them, and makes them an example to others. It muſt therefore, if things are ſo, be very great folly to envy the condition of ungodly men, or imitate them in their vices. Only let us take care not to abuſe this doctrine, ſo as to imagine, that all thoſe who are in adverſity are wicked men; ſince God does likewiſe ſometimes permit, for juſt and wiſe reaſons, thoſe whom he loves to be reduced to a very forlorn condition, as it formerly happened to *Job*,

a man

a man ſo upright and acceptable in the ſight of God.

CHAP. XIX.

JOB, in his reply to *Bildad*, complains of the unkindneſs of his friends. II. He repreſents the number and greatneſs of the ſufferings which God had laid upon him, and conjures them to have compaſſion on him. III. He declares his firm confidence in God, and expreſſes, in very remarkable terms, his hope in him.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter, as in ſeveral others of this Book, we may obſerve, I. That *Job* ſeems to give way to immoderate complaints about the greatneſs of his afflictions; but ſtill he gives glory to God, and humbles himſelf before him. This ſhould ſerve for a warning to us, whatever condition it ſhall pleaſe God to reduce us to, not to give the leaſt way to impatience, but ſubmit to his will. II. *Job* complained, and not without reaſon, that his friends, who ought to have been his comforters, made his burden ſtill heavier by their reproaches. From whence we may learn, that inſtead of behaving thus towards perſons in affliction, we ought to have compaſſion on them, and endeavour to alleviate their pains, and make them more ſupportable. III. We find, however, that *Job* in his troubles always truſted in God, as he teſtifies in theſe beautiful expreſſions: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he ſhall ſtand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my ſkin, worms deſtroy this body; yet in my fleſh I ſhall ſee God: Whom I ſhall ſee for myſelf, and mine eyes ſhall behold.* Children of God ought to encourage themſelves with the ſame hope in the midſt

midſt of afflictions, and in death itſelf; and theſe words of *Job* ought to raiſe their minds to a firm expectation of the reſurrection, and of the life to come, through *Jeſus Chriſt* our Saviour.

CHAP. XX.

ZOPHAR ſpeaks a ſecond time, and ſhews that if wicked men are happy in this world, their happineſs does not laſt long; that God takes away their riches and their ſtrength: and that his wrath falls upon them, their families, and all that belongs to them.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we are again taught, that how happy ſoever the wicked may imagine themſelves, and though they think themſelves firmly eſtabliſhed, their joy and glory is of very ſhort duration, and ſoon paſſes away; that ſhould they be exalted to heaven, God would confound their pride; that the goods they have acquired by injuſtice, will be taken from them; that their children fall into poverty and miſery; and they themſelves, after they have been in proſperity for a time, fall into troubles and unſpeakable ſorrows. This great truth, which is ſo often repeated in the Book of *Job*, and which agrees ſo well with the experience of all times, deſerves to be ſeriouſly conſidered. And ſince this is the portion which God reſerves for the wicked, let us dread drawing upon ourſelves theſe effects of his wrath; let us never place our happineſs in the poſſeſſion of the advantages and good things of this world; but let us ſeek it only in the fear of the Lord, and in holineſs, which alone can procure us ſolid happineſs, both in this life and after death.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

I. JOB returns an anſwer to *Zophar*'s ſecond ſpeech, intreating his friends to hear him; and to ſhew them that they were miſtaken, he tells them that wicked men live often in affluence and great plenty of all things, though they have no fear of God before their eyes. II. *Job* confeſſes, indeed, that God does at length puniſh them and cut them off, and that the divine vengeance purſues their poſterity; but then he takes notice that what happens after their death, does not prove they were not happy while they lived. *Job* ſays all this to convince his friends that God does not always puniſh the ungodly in this world; and therefore, that all thoſe whom God afflicts, are not neceſſarily of that number, as his friends would have it.

REFLECTIONS.

JOB continues to teach us how to judge of proſperity and adverſity. He ſhews that the wicked, and thoſe that entirely caſt off the fear of God, and inſult him to ſo great a degree as to ſay, *Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways*; that theſe are ſometimes found to ſpend their whole lives in plenty and in pleaſure; that they abound with good things, even unto their death; and that if their poſterity be unhappy after they are gone, they ſee it not. He obſerves, on the other hand, that the righteous are ſometimes ſeen to lead a miſerable life, and die as they have lived. The concluſion we ought to draw from hence is, not to judge of the happineſs or miſery of men, nor of the ſhare they have in the divine favour or diſpleaſure, by what befals them in this world. Proſperity is not always a mark of God's favour, nor adverſity

always

always a proof of his anger; therefore we muſt not be offended if we ſee ſinners in proſperity, and the righteous in adverſity; but muſt look for the puniſhment of the wicked, and the true reward of the righteous, in the inward ſtate of their ſouls; and eſpecially, in what will be their lot after this life.

CHAP. XXII.

ELIPHAZ ſpeaks the third time, and refutes what *Job* had aſſerted. I. He tells him that God neither gains nor loſes by the good or evil actions of men. II. He repreſents things, as if his ſins were the only cauſe why God had afflicted him; and accuſes him of injuſtice and uncharitableneſs. III. He reminds him, that in all ages the judgments of God have overtaken the wicked. Laſtly, He exhorts *Job* to acknowledge his guilt, and to repent; promiſing him that if he would do ſo, God would reſtore him to his favour, and fill him with good things.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM hence we are to draw theſe four inſtructive leſſons: I. That man, by doing good, cannot be profitable to God; that there is no acceſſion of happineſs to the Almighty, when we are righteous and walk in integrity; but that the advantage is all to ourſelves. Theſe words are very remarkable, and teach us, that if God gives us laws, and commands us to obſerve them, he only does it for our good; and if we offend and diſobey him, we only hurt ourſelves. II. The next inſtruction is, that injuſtice, violence, and want of charity, are great ſins in the ſight of God; and that it is likewiſe a great ſin to condemn the innocent when they ſuffer, and to charge them with bringing the wrath of God upon themſelves

ſelves by their ſins, as *Eliphaz* accuſed *Job*. III. That the ways of God's providence are perfectly righteous, and have always ſo appeared, in what has befallen good or bad men, or their poſterity; but that nevertheleſs we ſometimes ſee men, notoriouſly wicked, enjoy the pleaſures and advantages of this life. This evidently ſhews, that we cannot form a judgment of men either by their proſperity or adverſity. IV. The laſt words of this chapter are very uſeful and inſtructive: *Eliphaz* therein teaches us, that when we fly to the mercy of God, and renounce our evil ways which have provoked his wrath and indignation againſt us, he is moved by our prayers, and beſtows his grace upon us; that then our delight is in him, and we may promiſe ourſelves the moſt comfortable effects of his love.

CHAP. XXIII.

JOB anſwers *Eliphaz* a third time; and ſays, that he was fully perſuaded of his innocence; that he deſired to be judged by the Lord himſelf, to convince his friends that his ſins were not the cauſe of his extreme ſufferings.

REFLECTIONS.

TO judge aright of what *Job* ſays in this chapter, we muſt obſerve that it is a reply to *Eliphaz*, who had accuſed *Job* of injuſtice and hypocriſy; to which *Job* anſwers, that he was innocent of thoſe crimes, and that, in that reſpect, he called God to witneſs his integrity, was willing to appear before him, and ſubmit to his judgment. However, we muſt not underſtand what *Job* ſays, as if he pretended to be innocent in all reſpects before God. We may learn from hence, that if good men may lawfully maintain their own innocence, when they are unjuſtly

unjuſtly accuſed, and when they have the teſtimony of a good conſcience, they ought nevertheleſs always to confeſs their own weakneſs; give glory to God, even when he afflicts them; and acknowledge that he is perfectly righteous, and ſupremely wiſe in all his diſpenſations towards them.

CHAP. XXIV.

JOB's deſign in this chapter, is to prove that God does not always puniſh the wicked in this life; and that afflictions are not always a ſign of his wrath againſt thoſe who endure them. Upon this, he takes occaſion to deſcribe the injuſtice, extortion, violence, murders, adulteries, and ſuch like abominations, which are daily committed in the world; and makes this obſervation, that many of thoſe who commit ſuch things, are ſo far from receiving in this life the puniſhment they deſerve, that they proſper, though God ſees all the evil of their doings, and will not leave them always unpuniſhed.

REFLECTIONS.

JOB deſcribes in this diſcourſe the impiety, injuſtice, cruelty, and other crimes of the wicked; and deſires his friends to take notice, that God does not always diſplay his vengeance on them; that they even frequently ſucceed in their ill deſigns; but that however God ſees them, and that at laſt his righteous judgments overtake them. This doctrine is well worth our ſerious meditation, that when we ſee ſo much wickedneſs and impiety prevailing in the world, even among thoſe who profeſs to know God, our faith may not fail; but we may remember that God ſees it as well as we, and in a manner infinitely more perfect; and as nothing eſcapes his cogniſance, ſo nothing can eſcape his judgment. From

hence likewiſe it follows, that it is a very falſe and dangerous imagination, to believe that men are innocent and acceptable to God becauſe they ſeem happy in this world; or to pronounce them guilty, becauſe they appear miſerable. Wherefore, inſtead of judging men by proſperity or adverſity, we muſt conſider whether they live a godly life or not, ſince that makes men truly happy or unhappy, and God will render at laſt to all men according to their works.

CHAP. XXV.

BILDAD addreſſing himſelf to *Job* a third time, deſcribes the power and juſtice of God, and man's meanneſs and unworthineſs; and concludes from thence, that man cannot be found righteous before him.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we may learn, that the power of God is infinite; that he is perfectly righteous and holy; and that man, who is a frail and corrupt creature, can never be found pure, nor juſtify himſelf before him. The uſe we are to make of this doctrine is, that men ought to humble themſelves in the preſence of the Almighty, and ſubmit to every thing he ſhall pleaſe to do with them.

CHAP. XXVI.

JOB, in anſwer to *Bildad*, who had exhorted him to conſider the power of God, and his unſpotted holineſs, tells him that all he had ſaid was uſeleſs and unprofitable; and that he was ſenſible of the majeſty of God, and firmly perſuaded of his unſearchable wiſdom; which he expreſſes his ſenſe of, in a deſcription of ſeveral of the wonders of creation and providence.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

JOB here teaches us, that the works of God are many and wonderful; that we know but a very ſmall part of them; and that we cannot comprehend all the reaſons of God's conduct in the government of the world. God is ſo great, ſo powerful, ſo juſt and wiſe, that we ought not to find fault with any thing that he does, nor pry into his ways with too much curioſity. We ought rather to be firmly perſuaded that he governs all things with wiſdom and juſtice, and humbly ſubmit to all his diſpenſations; acknowledging withal his goodneſs, which appears in this, that if his deſigns and works are in ſome reſpects hid from us, what he has revealed and we know concerning them, is ſufficient to teach us to fear him and make us happy, if we make a right uſe of it.

CHAP. XXVII.

I. JOB goes on and proteſts, that though he had maintained his innocence againſt the calumnies of his friends, he would never call in queſtion the juſtice of God's Providence. II. He ſhews afterwards, that wicked men and hypocrites come to a fatal end; that they are puniſhed many ways; and that their happineſs is of ſhort duration, and cannot ſecure them from the divine vengeance.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM what *Job* here ſays, we learn, I. Never to ſay or think any thing contrary to the ſentiments we ought to entertain of the righteouſneſs and majeſty of God. II. That we may nevertheleſs, when unjuſtly accuſed, alledge the teſtimony of our own conſcience in the ſupport of our innocence, provided we do it with humility and ſincerity. III.

That the end of the wicked, and eſpecially of hypocrites, will be very deplorable; and that they will be ſeized with horror and deſpair, when God ſhall require their ſouls, and reward them according to their works. IV. *Job* has taught us, that although worldly men live in affluence, heap up riches, and leave them to their children, they ſoon paſs away, and we often ſee their poſterity expoſed to want and diſgrace. Theſe are viſible marks of God's juſtice towards the wicked, and ſhould ſerve as a powerful antidote againſt injuſtice, pride, and the love of the world.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THE deſign of this chapter is to ſhew, I. That men may know the things of nature, and make uſe of them to various purpoſes. II. That true wiſdom, which is the moſt precious of all things, is hid from them. III. That it is no where to be found but in God, who alone can beſtow it upon us; and that this divine wiſdom, which is the only true wiſdom, conſiſts in the fear of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we gather, I. That God has endued men with the knowledge of many things in nature, which are of great uſe in the various circumſtances of life; for which they have great reaſon to acknowledge the divine goodneſs; but that wiſdom is the moſt neceſſary and the moſt valuable thing in the world; that it is more precious than gold or ſilver, or any thing which men are apt to eſteem at the higheſt rate; and that therefore we ought to prefer it before all things, and labour inceſſantly to attain it. II. *Job* teaches us the true way to acquire this wiſdom, which does not proceed from ourſelves but from God, who alone is the author

thor of it, and gives it to all that apply for it, and ſeek it with their whole heart; which ſhould induce us to aſk it of him with zeal, humility and faith. III. *Job* teaches us, that this true wiſdom conſiſts in fearing God, and avoiding every thing that may offend him: Which is expreſſed by the laſt words of this chapter, *the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil, is underſtanding*. To this therefore let us apply ourſelves above all things, as the ſureſt way to pleaſe God, and arrive at true happineſs.

CHAP. XXIX.

I. JOB deſcribes the proſperous ſtate he was in before God afflicted him, and the reſpect that every one ſhewed him. II. He deſcribes his own integrity, and the care he took to adminiſter juſtice without partiality, and to comfort the miſerable. It muſt be obſerved, *Job* ſays all this, not out of vainglory, but to ſhew that God did not afflict him becauſe of his crimes, and that he had not made an ill uſe of his proſperity, as his friends poſitively affirmed.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things to be obſerved in this ſpeech of *Job*'s; I. That *Job* had been in great proſperity, and that in that condition he had behaved with juſtice and charity towards all; that he was the father of the poor, and the protector of the innocent. This example may teach all thoſe who enjoy riches, or authority, or any other advantages, to employ them to noble purpoſes, to be juſt and upright, and above all to do good to the poor, to comfort the miſerable, and defend the cauſe of thoſe that ſuffer wrong. II. The next thing to be obſerved is, that while *Job* was in proſperity he was reſpected

by all; but as ſoon as he fell into adverſity, every one forſook him. Thus it happens every day: men make their court to thoſe that have riches and honours and credit in the world; but abandon them as ſoon as they are deprived of theſe advantages; and virtue is commonly but little eſteemed, when it is not attended with worldly proſperity. This ſhews, that the opinions of men are extremely vain and unreaſonable; and therefore, that we ought not to make any great account of them, nor build our happineſs upon them.

CHAP. XXX.

I. JOB complains, that he who in his proſperity had been eſteemed by all that knew him, was forſaken by all, and expoſed to the contempt and inſults of his friends, and even of perſons of the meaneſt condition. II. He again complains of the evils with which he was overwhelmed; and that God would not deliver him from them, though he earneſtly implored his aſſiſtance.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE complaints that *Job* here makes, of being forſaken by thoſe who reſpected him formerly, and affronted even by the vileſt of the people, diſcover the folly, blindneſs, and unreaſonableneſs of men, who, inſtead of eſteeming virtue and piety alone, value nothing but riches, and the advantages of this life; and deſpiſe thoſe whom they ſee in miſery and poverty, though they are men of piety and virtue. This ſhews, that the friendſhip and eſteem of men is not to be depended upon, nor ought it to be our chief aim. II. We ſee that *Job* complains chiefly, that God himſelf ſeemed to have forſaken him, and that he ſtill expoſed him to ſufferings. It is a ſmall thing to be rejected by men, if God with his favour look upon

upon us; but our condition is really deplorable, when God ſeems to hide his face from us, and anſwers us not in the time of trouble. The condition to which *Job* was reduced, ought to comfort thoſe whom God cauſes to paſs through the like trials. However, they ſhould likewiſe learn from what happened to *Job*, to moderate their complaints, to undergo their ſufferings with patience, and to wait with reſignation, till it ſhall pleaſe God to deliver them, which he will not fail to do in due ſeaſon.

CHAP. XXXI.

JOB proteſts that he had lived in ſtrict chaſtity, and had not only avoided actual ſins of uncleanneſs, but even impure looks and irregular thoughts; that he had done juſtice impartially; had had compaſſion on the miſerable; had never put his truſt in riches; and had avoided idolatry, here expreſſed by *looking up to the ſun and moon:* And, laſtly, he proteſts that he never rejoiced in the misfortune of his enemies; that he had uſed hoſpitality; and that he had not endeavoured to conceal or excuſe his own faults. *Job*'s deſign in all he here ſays, is to vindicate himſelf againſt the accuſations of his friends, who told him, his ſins had reduced him to the miſerable condition he was in.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter deſerves to be read and meditated upon with great attention; as it contains noble ſentiments concerning the principal duties of religion, and particularly purity and chaſtity, juſtice and charity, the dread of God's judgments, alms, and compaſſion on the miſerable, contempt of wordly goods, piety towards God, the love of our enemies, and confeſſion of ſins. If *Job* had ſuch pure and exalted notions, and behaved with ſo much prudence

and piety in his time; much more muſt it be the duty of Chriſtians to think and act as he did. Let us then learn from *Job* to be chaſte, and keep at the greateſt diſtance from all manner of impurity, even in thoughts and looks; to do juſtice to all; to pity the poor and miſerable, and aſſiſt them with all our might; and protect the innocent. His example likewiſe teaches us, not to put our truſt in the things of this world; not to rejoice at the evil which befals thoſe that hate us; to obſerve the ſtrict rules of juſtice and equity in all our affairs; and, laſtly, not to hide our own faults, but confeſs them ſincerely; and not to flatter ourſelves in our ſins. To animate us to theſe duties, let us conſider what *Job* ſo much inſiſts upon in this chapter, that if he had given himſelf up to the ſeveral ſins he there mentions, he ſhould not have eſcaped the divine vengeance; and that there is a particular curſe attending the unclean, the unjuſt, the proud, thoſe who ſet their affections on earthly things, the profane and uncharitable. Laſtly, Let us reflect what a great alleviation it muſt be to *Job*'s ſufferings, to be able to ſay with truth what he here ſays, and to have faithfully diſcharged theſe duties in his proſperity. When men have endeavoured to live in innocence, they fail not to receive from thence the greateſt conſolation in time of adverſity: and though the piety we expreſs in affliction, if it be ſincere, is undoubtedly acceptable to God; it is ſtill more amiable, more comfortable, and more worthy of a man who loves God, to be pious, humble, and charitable, when we receive good from the hand of God, and enjoy health, eaſe, and proſperity.

CHAP. XXXII.

JOB's three friends making no reply, *Elihu*, who was alſo one of his friends, and had not yet ſpoke, blames

blames *Job* for having too much inſiſted upon his innocence; and condemns likewiſe his three friends, and tells them, they could not convince *Job*, nor anſwer his words. He adds, that though he was younger than they, he could not forbear ſpeaking his opinion freely.

REFLECTIONS.

IT appears from this and the following chapters, that *Elihu* was a very wiſe and underſtanding man, and paſſed a better judgment upon the condition of *Job* than his friends had done. He blamed *Job* for giving way too much to ſuch ſevere complaints, and for ſpeaking too advantageouſly of himſelf; but he blamed, at the ſame time, his three friends for condemning him as they had done, and ſaying, that his ſufferings were a proof that his piety was inſincere. From whence we learn, never to judge too favourably of ourſelves, nor of others too ſeverely; we likewiſe ſee how much we ought to eſteem the counſels and diſcourſes of wiſe and judicious men, ſuch as *Elihu* was. Laſtly, The proteſtation that *Elihu* made, that he would ſpeak freely and impartially, ſhews that we ſhould always ſpeak with ſincerity, without being reſtrained by any regard to men, eſpecially when the glory of God, and their good require us to ſpeak the truth.

CHAP. XXXIII.

ELIHU reproves *Job* for having too much inſiſted upon his innocence, and having in ſome meaſure accuſed God of afflicting him unjuſtly. He then repreſents to him, that God, to keep men from ſin, gives them frequent warnings; that to this end he chaſtiſes them, and reduces them to great extremity,

mity, as *Job* then was, that by acknowledging their ſins, they may be delivered from their ſufferings. This chapter contains many excellent inſtructions.

REFLECTIONS.

THE deſign of *Elihu* in this chapter is to convince *Job* that he was in the wrong to ſpeak ſo much of his innocence, and to complain as he had done; ſo that the general inſtruction we learn from hence is, not to juſtify ourſelves, nor murmur when God afflicts us. After this *Elihu* repreſents, in a very elegant and convincing manner, God's dealings with men, and the various means he makes uſe of to recover them from their ſins. He ſays, that God ſpeaks to men once and twice; that he warns them with great patience, and that this is particularly his deſign, when he viſits them with pains and diſeaſes, which bring them even to the brink of their graves; and that God's end in all this is, to turn man from the evil he would otherwiſe have committed, and that in ſuch a ſtate of affliction, if men have recourſe to God, and are aſſiſted by the advice and prayers of God's faithful ſervants, he will have compaſſion on them, will reſtore them, and give them occaſion to praiſe his power and goodneſs. Theſe are inſtructions of the greateſt uſe and importance, and whether we enjoy health and eaſe, or are expoſed to affliction, diſeaſes and ſufferings, we ought frequently to call them to mind, by reading this chapter, that we may learn to make a good uſe of the various warnings which God gives us, and of every thing he does for our ſalvation.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIV.

I. ELIHU continues to reprove *Job*, for ſpeaking too much of his own righteouſneſs, and blames his exceſſive complaints: He tells him, that God is perfectly juſt in all his doings, and that it is not for men to find fault; that he examines all their actions; that he brings low and deſtroys the mighty; that he delivers thoſe that are in miſery, and that he puniſhes men, and even whole nations, with a power which none can reſiſt, and at the ſame time with perfect juſtice. II. He exhorts *Job* to think well on theſe things, and humbly to betake himſelf to the mercy of God.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this diſcourſe of *Elihu*'s, we may conclude, I. That we ſhould never complain of the proceedings of the Almighty when he corrects us, nor pretend to be righteous before him. II. That God does every thing with wiſdom and juſtice, and that men, who are as nothing before him, ought not to call him to an account for any of his dealings; that he examines and knows the behaviour of every man; that as he is the judge of the world, he will render to men according to their works, and that whether he puniſhes or does us good, none can hinder him. Theſe inſtructions are contained in theſe words of *Elihu*; *Far be it from God, that he ſhould do wickedneſs; and from the Almighty, that he ſhould commit iniquity. For the work of a man ſhall he render to him, and cauſe every man to find according to his ways. For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he ſeeth all his goings. There is no darkneſs nor ſhadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themſelves. When he giveth quietneſs, who then can*

can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done againſt a nation, or againſt a man only. Laſtly, we ſee in this chapter, that when God corrects us, we have nothing to do but to humble ourſelves, to beſeech him to make known to us our ſins, and to promiſe never more to fall into thoſe ſins whereby we have offended him.

CHAP. XXXV.

ELIHU ſtill endeavours to convince *Job* that he ought not to juſtify himſelf before God; and to this end repreſents the power and majeſty of God; ſhews him that God receives no advantage, nor any hurt, from the good or ill, that men do, and from thence would perſuade him to own the goodneſs and juſtice of God, to humble himſelf before him, and to make a good uſe of his forbearance and long-ſuffering.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter *Elihu* teaches us a doctrine of very great importance, which is, that our righteouſneſs may profit other men, as our ſins may do them harm; but that God receives no advantage from the good we do, nor any hurt from the ſins we commit. This ſhews us, that God being perfectly happy, and having no need of us, he neither commands nor forbids any thing, but for our own good. This doctrine engages us, I. Chearfully to obey all God's commands, ſince in ſo doing we labour for our own happineſs; and to take heed not to offend him by our ſins, which will only make us miſerable. II. It follows from hence, that God, in all his dealings with us, and particularly when he afflicts us, has our good alone in view; if he puniſhes us, he does it not

not only with juſtice but with goodneſs too; and therefore inſtead of charging God fooliſhly, as if he treated us with too great ſeverity, we ought readily to acquieſce in all the diſpenſations of his wiſe and good providence.

CHAP. XXXVI.

I. ELIHU continues his diſcourſe, in which he ſhews, that God deals righteouſly both with the good and the wicked; that he afflicts thoſe he loves to try them, but that at laſt he deſtroys wicked men and hypocrites. II. He exhorts *Job* to conſider theſe things, and humbly adore the juſtice and majeſty of God, which are manifeſted in the works of nature, as well as in his dealings towards the children of men.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter ſets before us God's dealings with men; and the ſum of what *Elihu* teaches on this ſubject is, that God Almighty rejects no man, and that he continually beholds the upright; but when the ſins of men increaſe, he afflicts them to make them wiſe, and to turn them from their iniquity; that if they hear his voice, and ſerve him, he delivers them, and makes them end their days in peace; but as for hypocrites, and ſuch as harden their hearts and deſpiſe his word, and his corrections, he delivers them up to his wrath. As *Elihu* exhorts *Job* to conſider theſe things, and to turn unto the Lord, and to acknowledge his greatneſs, wiſdom, and juſtice, we ought likewiſe to meditate on theſe important truths, and make a right uſe of God's gracious warnings and corrections, and of all his providential dealings with us; we ſhould fear his judgments, and adore his infinite

infinite power and majeſty, which ſo evidently appear in all his works.

CHAP. XXXVII.

ELIHU repreſents the power of God as it appears in thunder, rain, ſnow, and the other works of nature. He takes notice, that God makes uſe of theſe things to do good to men, or for their puniſhment; and exhorts *Job* to conſider theſe wonders, to acknowledge his own ignorance and weakneſs, and reverently to adore the judgments of God.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE words of *Elihu* engage us moſt ſeriouſly to reflect upon the wonders of nature, and particularly upon the thunder, ſnow, rain, clouds, the winds, and the various ſeaſons of the year. In all theſe things we diſcover firſt, the infinite power of God, and next, his wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs; ſince God makes uſe of all theſe things, and the different effects they produce in the world, as means to promote the good and happineſs of mankind, and ſometimes he makes them ſerve as inſtruments of correction. This chapter therefore calls upon us to conſider attentively the wonderful manner in which the world is governed, and to make a right uſe of the mercies God vouchſafes us, and of his chaſtening diſpenſations, which are all deſigned to teach us to know and fear him. Here ends the diſpute between *Job* and his friends; and from the account we have in this Book of what paſſed between them, we learn, that the knowledge of God and religion was ſo far from being totally extinguiſhed in that country, that there were in it men who had made great improvements in piety and knowledge. We muſt not therefore imagine, that the *Iſraelites* were then the only people who

who knew the true God, and that all who were not included in the covenant God had made with them, were neceſſarily involved in ignorance, idolatry, and impiety, and excluded from the grace of God and eternal ſalvation.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

AFTER what had paſſed between *Job* and his friends, God thought fit to interpoſe, and what he ſaid to *Job* takes up the remainder of this Book. Here God convinces *Job*, that neither he nor any other had a right to enquire too curiouſly into the reaſons of his proceedings. To this end he ſets before him his wondrous works, the manner in which the earth was formed, the admirable things to be ſeen in the ſea, in the light, the ſnow, the rain, the tempeſts, the ſtars, and in the order of the ſeaſons; and obſerves, that man is not able to comprehend the divine wiſdom in all theſe things.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD, to humble *Job*, and convince him of his weakneſs and ignorance, bids him conſider the many creatures of which the world is compoſed, and the admirable order of nature. We alſo ſhould make the ſame reflections, ſince all theſe marvellous works are ſet before our eyes; we ſhould likewiſe take notice of the ſupreme power and profound wiſdom of the Creator of all things. This meditation is very proper to make us ſenſible of the divine majeſty, and of our own meanneſs; eſpecially as the works of God are ſo great and wonderful that we cannot comprehend them, nor find out their nature, their cauſes, and effects. Therefore we ought to adore with reverence ſo wiſe and powerful a Being, to ſubmit ourſelves to all the orders of his providence, without pretend-

pretending to find out all the reaſons of his conduct, and to believe that all he does in the world, and to us in particular, is done with juſtice and goodneſs.

CHAP. XXXIX.

THIS chapter is a continuation of the deſcription of the wonders of creation and providence, which are diſcovered in the ſeveral creatures that God has placed on the earth, and in the air. *Job* confeſſes his weakneſs, and gives glory to God.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two reflections to be made on this chapter; I. What God himſelf here ſays teaches us, that when he formed ſo great a variety of creatures in the world, his deſign was to make himſelf known unto men; and therefore the beſt uſe we can make of our reaſon is to conſider, with ſerioufneſs and attention, the power and wiſdom of God, which we have ſo many viſible and ſurpriſing proofs of in all his works, and particularly in the beaſts of the earth, and fowls of the air. The different qualities that God has given them, the manner of preſerving their ſpecies, providing for their ſubſiſtence, and the preſervation of their young; their various uſes, and the wonderful order and regularity obſervable in all this, are moſt evident proofs that ſome almighty being, of infinite wiſdom and unbounded goodneſs, is the maker of them, and that he, by his providence, is the governor of them all. II. The confeſſion that *Job* makes of his own vileneſs, and how much he was in the wrong to ſpeak as he had done, ſhould teach us the effect which all theſe wonders ſhould produce in us, which is, that they ſhould convince us of our own ignorance and weakneſs, and ſo humble us before God, that we may never ſay or think

think any thing contrary to the profound ſubmiſſion we owe to him.

CHAP. XL, and XLI.

THESE two chapters contain a deſcription of two remarkable animals, one of which is called *Behemoth*, which is thought to be the elephant, or ſea-horſe; and the other *Leviathan*, which is ſuppoſed to be ſome great fiſh, or the crocodile.

REFLECTIONS.

UPON theſe two chapters we are to obſerve, that God, intending to make *Job* ſenſible of his power, repreſents to him the wonderful nature of the two kinds of animals here mentioned. Although theſe creatures are not known to us, as they were in the country where *Job* lived, yet we cannot but admire what is ſaid of them in this place. However, it is eaſy for us to conſider the wonders of Providence in many other creatures which we are acquainted with, and in general, in all the works of God. Only let us take heed not to be leſs affected with theſe things, becauſe we ſee them daily, but rather let the reflections we continually make about them, raiſe our ſouls to the knowledge of God our Creator, and lead us to love, adore, and fear him.

CHAP. XLII.

THERE are three things offered to our view in this laſt chapter of *Job*. I. *Job* confeſſes the power and juſtice of God, and humbles himſelf before him. II. God rebukes his three friends for what they had ſaid to him, and orders them to apply to *Job* to offer ſacrifices for them. III. God delivers *Job* from his ſufferings, and reſtores him to a more happy condition than he was in before his ſufferings.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to learn from hence is, I. To give glory to God, as *Job* did; to humble ourſelves before him, eſpecially when we have ſaid or done any thing contrary to our duty, and to *repent in duſt and aſhes*. II. God's reproof of *Job*'s three friends proves plainly that they had done wrong in condemning him, and affirming that adverſity is a mark of God's diſpleaſure. Hence we may learn likewiſe, that God is offended when we judge hard of thoſe who ſuffer, and particularly of good men in affliction. The command he gave *Job*'s friends to have recourſe to his interceſſion ſhews, that the prayers of good men are of great efficacy to reconcile us with God, and that we ſhould have recourſe to them chiefly, when we have done them any wrong. Thirdly and laſtly, We ſee how God, after he had afflicted and tried this holy man, put a happy end to his troubles, and ſo bleſſed him that he gave him double of all that he had loſt, and brought him to a very great and happy old age. By this illuſtrious example God was pleaſed to teach men in all ages, that if he afflicts his children to try them, he grants them at laſt a happy deliverance, and that he often bleſſes them, even in this life, and gives them much more than he had taken from them. The uſe we ſhould make therefore of the hiſtory contained in this Book is, to learn from thence never to be diſheartned in time of trouble, but to ſuffer patiently, and make a happy improvement of our afflictions, imitating the faith and piety of *Job*, both in proſperity and adverſity.

The end of the Book of JOB.

THE

BOOK

OF

PSALMS.

ARGUMENT.

The Book of Pſalms is a collection of ſacred hymns, moſt of which were compoſed by King David. *In this Book there are ſome Pſalms of praiſe and adoration, which diſplay the majeſty, power, goodneſs, and other attributes of the Divine Being; others are ſongs of thankſgiving, bleſſing God for mercies vouchſafed, either to the* Iſraelites *in general, or to ſome particular perſons; others again of the Pſalms are prayers, in which* David, *or ſome other Prophet, the Author of them, implores the mercy of God, the pardon of ſins, or deliverance from dangers and afflictions; ſome of the Pſalms are hiſtorical, compoſed with a deſign to preſerve the remembrance of the moſt conſiderable events which befel the* Jewiſh *nation. Laſtly, Some of them are prophetical, preſenting us with ſeveral predictions relating to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the times of the Goſpel. It is evident from this view, that the reading and meditating on this divine Book may be attended with very great advantage; and therefore, that it ought to be of general and common uſe among Chriſtians.*

PSALM I.

IN this firſt Pſalm *David* repreſents the happineſs of good men, and the miſeries of the ungodly.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the Pſalm.*

IN this Pſalm we are taught, I. That one mark of a good man is, that he ſhuns all intercourſe with the wicked and ungodly; that he obſerves none of their falſe maxims, imitates none of their diſorders; and that he makes his chief pleaſure conſiſt in meditating upon, and keeping the law of God. II. That the righteous are perfectly happy; that the Lord knows and bleſſes them, and makes them proſper. III. That the wicked will not eſcape his vengeance; and that, ſooner or later, they will fall into the utmoſt miſeries.

PSALM II.

I. IN this Pſalm *David* expreſſes his firm confidence, that the deſigns of his enemies, of the kings and people who oppoſed him, would be in vain; and that notwithſtanding their endeavours, God, who had anointed him king, would eſtabliſh his kingdom. II. He exhorts them to ſubmit to the will of God, and to ſerve him, leſt they expoſe themſelves to his vengeance. This Pſalm is prophetical, and relates to the kingdom of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE confidence which *David* manifeſts in this Pſalm, ſhews, in general, that attempts againſt the deſigns of God are vain; that what he has decreed will

will always come to paſs; and that nothing can hurt thoſe whom he loves, and has promiſed to bleſs. But the application which the Apoſtles make to our Lord of theſe words, *Thou art my ſon, this day have I begotten thee*, engage us more eſpecially to conſider this Pſalm as it relates to the kingdom of *Jeſus Chriſt*, the Son of God, which has been eſtabliſhed in the world, in ſpite of all oppoſition from kings, and the great men of the earth, and will ſubſiſt for ever. And ſince this kingdom is eſtabliſhed among us, and we have the happineſs to be Chriſt's ſubjects, let us ſubmit ourſelves to this glorious king; let us ſerve him with humility and joy; let us dread expoſing ourſelves to his wrath, and let us place all our truſt and confidence in his favour and protection.

PSALM III.

THIS is a prayer that *David* made when he was perſecuted by *Abſalom* his ſon; in which he complains of the great number of his enemies, implores the divine aſſiſtance, and expreſſes his entire truſt in the protection of the Almighty.

REFLECTIONS.

DAVID's firm confidence in God, when purſued by his ſon *Abſalom*, teaches us, that a man who fears God may be reduced to great extremities; but that whatever condition he is in, he is eaſy and full of truſt; that he fears not men, having God on his ſide; that he riſes up and lies down with confidence, and always depends upon the divine aſſiſtance, even in the greateſt dangers.

PSALM IV.

I. DAVID implores God's aſſiſtance againſt his enemies, and exhorts them to lay aſide their deſigns, and ſubmit to the will of God, who had appointed him king. II. He declares that he truſted in God alone, and that the aſſurance he had of his favour, rendered him more happy than worldly men are in their greateſt proſperity.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from this Pſalm, I. That good men always apply to God in their diſtreſs. II. That the enterprizes formed againſt thoſe whom God favours, are in vain, and without effect. III. That worldly men ſeek after nothing but the advantages of this life, but that the righteous aſpire after the favour of God; that his favour is all their happineſs, and all their ſecurity; and fills their hearts with more joy, even under the greateſt afflictions, than worldly men feel in their greateſt plenty and proſperity.

PSALM V.

I. KING *David* being afflicted and perſecuted, prays the Lord to aſſiſt him; aſſuring himſelf that God, who hates cruel and deceitful men, would confound his cruel and unjuſt perſecutors, and grant him the favour to go and worſhip him in his tabernacle. II. He prays God to guide and defend him from the ſnares and malice of the wicked, that he, and all righteous men, may have reaſon to praiſe him, and always to truſt in his protection.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THESE four things are remarkable in this Pſalm. I. The fervency and confidence with which good men call upon the Lord in their neceſſities. II. Their zeal for his ſervice, and the joy and reverence with which they adore him, in places ſet apart for public worſhip. III. God's abhorrence and deteſtation of ſin, and eſpecially of pride and deceit; and the puniſhment reſerved for the proud and unjuſt. And laſtly, His favourable protection of all thoſe that fear him and truſt in him.

PSALM VI.

IN this prayer *David* being afflicted, repreſents the greatneſs of his ſufferings, and intreats God not to puniſh him in his wrath; but to pardon his ſins, and to deliver him. He makes this prayer with a firm aſſurance that God will hear him, and that his enemies ſhould be confounded.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE firſt words of this Pſalm, *O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chaſten me in thy hot diſpleaſure,* expreſs the humility of thoſe, who with a lively ſenſe of their ſins, and of the need they ſtand in of the divine aſſiſtance, implore God's mercy. When we uſe this prayer, we ſhould do it, not only with a deſire to be delivered from the evils and afflictions of this life, but chiefly in order to obtain pardon for our ſins, and deliverance from the puniſhments of the life to come. *David*'s expreſſion of confidence in this Pſalm, wherein he manifeſts his repentance and humiliation, proves, that when we have recourſe to God with humility and faith, we may be ſure he

will hear our requeſt, and grant us that aſſiſtance we ſtand in need of, whatever dangers we are expoſed to.

PSALM VII.

I. *DAVID* prays the Lord to defend him from his enemies, and calls him to witneſs his innocence. II. He aſſures himſelf that God will hear him, and turn the enterpriſes of his enemies againſt him to their own deſtruction, if they perſiſted in their deſigns.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Pſalm we are taught to have recourſe to God in our afflictions, as *David* had when he was perſecuted by his enemies. But we are here likewiſe taught, that if we would have God hear us, there ſhould be no iniquity found in us; that God ſearches the heart and the reins, and favours thoſe who walk in ſincerity and uprightneſs of heart. As for the ungodly, *David* declares in this Pſalm, that their wickedneſs ſhall come to an end; that God lets them alone, and bears with them for a time; but if they perſiſt in their wickedneſs, he prepares for them the puniſhments they deſerve, and will make the evil which they deſign for others fall upon their own heads. Theſe are powerful motives to induce us to adore the juſtice of God; to improve by his forbearance and long-ſuffering; and to avoid every thing that may expoſe us to his vengeance.

PSALM VIII.

DAVID celebrates the power and majeſty of God, which ſo evidently appear in the works of the creation; and praiſes him in particular for creating man after his image, and giving him dominion over other creatures.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm engages our attention to the marks of God's infinite power, which we diſcover in the heavens, in the ſtars, and in the wonders we meet with by land and water. The uſe we ought to make of this meditation is to adore the majeſty of the Lord, and from the due conſideration of his greatneſs, and our own meanneſs, to ſay, *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the ſon of man, that thou viſiteſt him!* And ſince God has created us in his own image, enduing us with reaſon and underſtanding, that we may know and praiſe him, and has made other creatures ſubject to us, we ought gratefully to improve theſe advantages to his glory, and continually praiſe our creator and benefactor; ſaying, with *David*, *O Lord our governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!*

PSALM IX.

I, DAVID, in this Pſalm of thankſgiving for the victories he had obtained over his enemies, exhorts the righteous to join with him in praiſing the power, wiſdom, and juſtice of the Lord, who delivers thoſe that truſt in him, and confounds the malice and devices of the wicked. II. He beſeeches God to protect always thoſe that fear him, againſt the violence of their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Song *David* ſhews forth his piety, joy, and gratitude, on account of the victories he had gained by the divine aſſiſtance; which ſhould likewiſe ſtir us up to praiſe God with all our heart, for the deliverances he grants us, and for all his favours to us. Not content with praiſing him ourſelves, we ſhould, like

like *David*, publiſh abroad his kindneſs to us, and by that means engage others to join with us in bleſſing God, and in fearing him. Moreover, the Pſalmiſt here teaches us, that God is, and ever will be the king and judge of the world; that he will render to the wicked according to their works; that he ſearches out the wickedneſs of men; that all thoſe who offend him ſhall periſh; and that he will not ſuffer the wicked to prevail for ever. Laſtly, *David* aſſures us, that thoſe who fear the Lord may rely upon him; that he forgets not the cry of the humble in affliction; that he never forſakes thoſe that ſeek him; and that the expectation of the righteous ſhall not be in vain. Theſe are truths that we ought always to retain, as they tend very much to fill us with truſt in God, and ſtrongly engage us to depart from iniquity.

PSALM X.

I. THE prophet here deſcribes the violence, cruelty, and artifices, which the wicked make uſe of againſt the innocent. II. He beſeeches God to be the protector of the righteous; and hopes that his prayer will be heard.

REFLECTIONS.

THE complaints which the faithful make in this Pſalm, teach us not to be ſurpriſed if we ſee the righteous ſometimes oppreſſed, and the wicked ſucceed in their unjuſt and cruel deſigns. We ſee here, that wicked men often employ both deceit and force to deſtroy the good; that God ſuffers innocence to be oppreſſed for a time, and that then the wicked think they have nothing to fear, and that God will not take notice of their ſins. But this Pſalm teaches us likewiſe, that God does not always ſuffer the proud and

and unjuſt to prevail, but takes vengeance on their crimes; and as for the meek and humble, that he beholds their afflictions, hears their cries, and never forſakes them.

PSALM XI.

DAVID being perſecuted by his enemies, declared that he put his truſt in the Lord; and that he was perſuaded, God, who is a righteous judge, would ſupport good men, and pour down his judgments upon the wicked.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS Pſalm furniſhes us with an example of the confidence which the righteous have in the Lord their God, who is their ſure refuge, even when they are in the moſt deplorable condition, and know not what will become of them. II. King *David* teaches us, that God has his throne in the heavens; that he ſees and knows both the good and the wicked; that his ſoul hates thoſe that love unrighteouſneſs; that he will cauſe the fire of his vengeance to fall upon them; and as he is perfectly juſt himſelf, he loves juſtice above all things, and always favours the upright.

PSALM XII.

I. IN this, which is a Pſalm of Prayer, *David* complains how few were upright and ſincere, and that the people of his time were treacherous and full of miſchief. II. He prays God that he would, according to his promiſes, protect the innocent, and reſtrain the injuſtice and violence of thoſe who endeavoured to oppreſs them.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

I. *DAVID*'s complaint of the ſmall number of good people in his time, and his prayer to God upon that occaſion, teach us, that when we ſee iniquity abound, and how little there remains of honeſty and ſincerity among men, we ought to pray to God, that he would deliver us from the ſnares and malice of the wicked, and eſpecially from imitating them. II. God promiſes in this Pſalm, that he will root out all flattering and deceitful tongues, and that he will riſe up to revenge afflicted innocence. This ſhould teach us to avoid all deceit and injuſtice; and convince us, that if we walk in uprightneſs, God will always be our protector and defender.

PSALM XIII.

DAVID, in the bitterneſs of his ſoul, complains that God had forſaken him, and prays him to comfort him and deliver him from his terrors; in the midſt of which, he is nevertheleſs encouraged by a holy confidence, which induces him to praiſe the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm is very proper for perſons in affliction, and eſpecially for thoſe that labour under their ſins, and are deprived of the ſenſe of God's love. Such as are in this ſad condition, ſhould not deſpair, but rather have recourſe to God with confidence, implore his compaſſion, and beſeech him to comfort them, and enlighten them with his grace, leſt they ſink under the load of their afflictions; and, when God has delivered them, it is their duty to celebrate his mercy, and praiſe him for all his goodneſs.

PSALM

PSALM XIV.

I. *DAVID*, in this Pſalm, deſcribes the great and general corruption of the men of his age, their wickedneſs and impiety. II. He threatens the wicked with the judgment of God, and promiſes the righteous his aſſiſtance and deliverance.

REFLECTIONS.

DAVID's deſcription of the men of his time, agrees, in many reſpects, with what we ſee among Chriſtians; among whom ſo few ſeek God ſincerely, and ſo many live as if they believed there were no God. Therefore we ought ſeriouſly to meditate upon what is ſaid in this Pſalm, that we may be preſerved from ſuch corruption; to which end we ought to conſider, as *David* here teaches, that if the wickedneſs and depravation of men is great, God will take vengeance; and that in the worſt of times there are always ſome faithful and righteous men that fear God, who partake of his love and protection.

PSALM XV.

IN this Pſalm, which is doctrinal, *David* teaches us who are worthy to ſerve God in his tabernacle, and to enjoy his preſence, and by what marks they are diſtinguiſhed.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS very inſtructive Pſalm teaches us, that God will not admit all men into his preſence, nor eſteem them true members of his church, but only thoſe who walk in uprightneſs, who are faithful and ſincere in their diſcourſe and all their behaviour;

viour; who avoid ſlander, injuſtice, and extortion; who love good men, and religiouſly keep their promiſes and engagements. Such is the character of a virtuous man, and one that fears God, and ſuch is the glorious recompence that is promiſed to him; and ſince none but theſe can enjoy the effects of God's love in this world, or the next, we ought to apply ourſelves with great earneſtneſs to all theſe duties, and live in innocence and integrity, and then ſhall we experience the truth of the promiſe made in this Pſalm, *He that doth theſe things ſhall never be moved.*

PSALM XVI.

I. IN this prayer *David* intreats God to defend him, ſeeing he truſted in him; and declares, that he loved thoſe that feared the Lord and abhorred idolatry. II. He ſeems, from a ſenſe of the divine favour, to be full of joy, and teſtifies that he does not fear even death itſelf, and hopes to be for ever happy in communion with God.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are here to obſerve the ſentiments of the children of God, and their happineſs. As to their ſentiments, *David* teaches us, by his example, that they always truſt in God; that they love and eſteem the pious and virtuous above all; that they avoid the company and errors of the wicked, and adhere inviolably to the pure ſervice of God. As to their happineſs, this Pſalm teaches us that it is very great; that God himſelf is their portion and inheritance; that he is on their right hand that they may never be moved; and that the ſenſe of their happineſs makes them rejoice and praiſe God continually; and that they are even convinced that God will not abandon them to the power of death. Laſtly, though

though what has been ſaid in this Pſalm may ſuit *David*, and all the faithful, yet it is to be obſerved, that theſe words, *Thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell, neither wilt thou ſuffer thine holy one to ſee corruption*, were completely fulfilled only in *Jeſus Chriſt*; who, as St. *Peter* takes notice, *Acts* ii. being the Holy One of God, did not remain in the grave, nor ſee corruption; but was raiſed the third day, and exalted to heaven, where he reigneth over all things, and has prepared, for all true believers, joys that never ſhall expire.

PSALM XVII.

DAVID, in this prayer, intreats the Lord to conſider his innocence, to reſtrain the malice of his perſecutors, and to defend the righteous from the violence of the wicked. He declares moreover, that he did not ſeek for happineſs in the things of this world, but ſought it only in the divine preſence and favour.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE confidence with which *David* calls upon the Lord in this Pſalm, and his firm aſſurance that God, who knew the uprightneſs of his heart, would protect his innocence, ſhew the great advantage of an honeſt and ſincere heart; ſince in all conditions good men can apply to God with aſſurance, knowing that God will always be their protector; *That he preſerves them as the apple of his eye, and keeps them under the ſhadow of his wings.*
II. On the other hand we here learn, that God knows the ways of the ungodly; and let their power be ever ſo great, he will not fail to reſtrain their wickedneſs and pride, and ſupport the righteous.
III. From *David* we learn, not to ſeek our happineſs

neſs in the things of the world, as carnal and worldly men are wont to do; and to pray to God to ſecure us from their malice; and, above all, to keep us from being like them; ſaying, with the prophet, *O Lord, deliver me by thy hand from the men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whoſe bellies thou filleſt with thy hid treaſure.* Finally, The laſt words of this Pſalm, *As for me, I will behold thy face in righteouſneſs; I ſhall be ſatisfied, when I awake, with thy likeneſs*; ſhould raiſe our thoughts to the deſire and expectation of eternal happineſs, which the righteous ſhall enjoy after the reſurrection.

PSALM XVIII.

THIS is a Pſalm of Thankſgiving, in which *David*, ſeeing himſelf delivered from his enemies, vows to love God, and to praiſe him for ever. In this Pſalm he deſcribes the great dangers he had been expoſed to, his wonderful deliverances, and the victories he had gained over his enemies by the divine aſſiſtance; extolling the power, juſtice, and goodneſs, that God had ſhewn in delivering him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. FROM the firſt words of this Song we learn, that the divine favours and deliverances ſhould inſpire us with the moſt tender and ſincere affection, and lead us to praiſe God continually. II. *David*'s account of the extreme dangers he had been expoſed to, and the wonderful power of God diſplayed in his deliverance, ſhews, that whatever extremities we fall into, we ſhould never deſpair of God's aſſiſtance, if we fear him; that his power is greater than man's, and that he never wants means to deliver thoſe who hope in him. III. When *David* ſays, that God had rewarded

warded him according to his righteouſneſs, it cannot mean, that he thought himſelf innocent before God; but he thus ſpeaks, firſt, to ſignify that God had maintained the juſtice of his cauſe againſt *Saul*, and all thoſe who had perſecuted him unjuſtly, or would not own him for king; and ſecondly, to ſhew that God had approved of his never forſaking the pure religion, and the worſhip of the true God. The reflection we are to make on this particular, may be expreſſed in the words of *David*: *With the upright man, thou wilt ſhew thyſelf upright; with the pure, thou wilt ſhew thyſelf pure, and with the froward, thou wilt ſhew thyſelf froward.* IV. We obſerve in this Pſalm, the unhappy ſtate of the wicked; ſince, as *David* ſays, when they are in diſtreſs, there is none to deliver them, and when they cry to the Lord, he will not hear them. The conſideration of ſo melancholy a condition, ought to be a powerful motive to deter us from ſin. Laſtly, *David*'s zeal, expreſſed in the laſt verſes of this Pſalm, proves that it is not ſufficient to praiſe God in private for his mercies, but that we ought to proclaim his praiſes and loving-kindneſs to the utmoſt of our power, that his holy name may be glorified by us, and by all men.

PSALM XIX.

THIS Pſalm has two parts. In the firſt, *David* celebrates the glory of God, which appears in the order of nature, and particularly in the heavens and the ſun. In the ſecond, He ſpeaks of the excellency of the law of God; prays God to pardon his ſins, to keep him from offending him, and to ſanctify his thoughts, his words, and all his behaviour.

Reflections.

KING *David* here mentions the two principal means by which God has made himſelf known to us, which are the works of nature, and his word. Let us therefore make a good uſe of both theſe means; meditating upon the marvellous works of God, which afford us ſuch proofs of his power and wiſdom; but particularly let us apply ourſelves to the reading and meditating on his word. *David*'s high encomiums on God's word inform us, that it is a ſure, evident, and unerring rule of faith and practice; that it is of infinitely more value than the moſt excellent things of this world; that it was given to enlighten and ſanctify us, to rejoice and comfort the heart; that the fear of the Lord procures perfect happineſs to thoſe who are poſſeſſed with it, and that there is great reward in the keeping of his holy commandments. To theſe reflections let us add our humble and hearty prayers to God, with *David*, that he would imprint theſe truths in our hearts; that he would pardon all our ſins; that he would preſerve us above all from the ſins of preſumption, and that he would ſo ſanctify our thoughts, words, and actions, that they may be always acceptable in his ſight.

PSALM XX.

THE people of *Iſrael* pray to God, that he would preſerve king *David*, and make him victorious; and expreſs their firm confidence that God will grant their requeſts.

Reflections.

IT appears from this Pſalm, that the people are in duty bound to pray for kings and princes, whom God has ſet over them. That this is the duty of Chriſtians,

Chriſtians, as it was of the *Jews*, appears from theſe words of St. *Paul*, wherein he exhorts, *That prayers and ſupplications be made for kings, and all that are in authority*. The *Iſraelites* beſeech God in this Pſalm to hear the deſires of their king, and to grant him the victory over his enemies. Chriſtians, in like manner, ſhould beg of God to ſupport and defend their princes in juſt and neceſſary wars, and all their lawful undertakings; but the chief ſubject of their prayers ſhould be, that they may lead a quiet, peaceable, and godly life under thoſe who have the rule over them. Laſtly, We here find, that the glory and ſecurity of kings and ſtates depends on the divine favour and protection, to which they are accountable for all their victories and ſucceſs; and therefore, that kings and their ſubjects ought to labour above all things to render God propitious.

PSALM XXI.

THE ſubject of this Pſalm is the ſame as of the foregoing. Here the *Iſraelites* join with *David* in praiſing God for the victories he had vouchſafed him; and doubt not but he will continue his protection and aſſiſtance.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Pſalm we obſerve, I. That as it is the peoples duty to pray for their kings, ſo ought they to rejoice when God bleſſes them and their lawful deſigns, and heartily thank him. II. That God loves, and in a very extraordinary manner defends, juſt and pious kings, who call upon him, and truſt in him. III. That he brings low and deſtroys unrighteous princes, and eſpecially ſuch as oppoſe the eſtabliſhment of his kingdom, and the deſigns of his providence.

PSALM XXII.

I. DAVID complains that God had abandoned him to the violence of his afflictions, and to the fury of his enemies; he deſcribes the wretched ſtate he was reduced to, and beſeeches God to come to his aſſiſtance. II. However, he expreſſes a firm confidence in God, and even praiſes him for the deliverance he expected from his goodneſs, and exhorts all the faithful to join with him in praiſing the Lord. It muſt be obſerved that this Pſalm is prophetical, and relates more eſpecially to the ſufferings and kingdom of the Meſſiah.

REFLECTIONS.

TO improve by the reading of this Pſalm, we muſt conſider it as it relates to *David*, and as it refers to *Jeſus Chriſt*. If we conſider it in the firſt reſpect, we learn by *David*'s complaints, that thoſe whom God loves ſometimes fall into ſo deplorable a condition, as to believe God has forſaken them. But the faith which *David* teſtifies in this Pſalm, ſhews us likewiſe that we ſhould never be diſcouraged under afflictions; becauſe the Lord will deliver his children out of all their troubles, and give them cauſe to celebrate his goodneſs. II. This Pſalm contains a very plain deſcription of our Lord's ſufferings and profound humiliation. Here we read thoſe words which he uttered at his crucifixion; *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* Here we ſee how the *Jews* inſulted him when he hung upon the croſs, his hands and his feet pierced, his garments divided by lot, and the principal circumſtances of his paſſion and death. God was pleaſed all theſe things ſhould be foretold by *David*, that when they happened to our Lord we might not

not be ſo much ſurpriſed, and might acknowledge him to be the Meſſiah. We ſhould therefore deplore the blindneſs of the *Jews*, who are ſcandalized at the ſufferings and croſs of Chriſt, which ought rather to convince them that he is the Meſſiah whom God had promiſed. Theſe conſiderations ought to ſtrengthen our faith in Jeſus the Saviour of the world; as this Pſalm ſets before us the glory to which God has exalted him after his ſufferings, and which he now enjoys at the right hand of his father, and his kingdom is eſtabliſhed throughout all the earth.

PSALM XXIII.

DAVID repreſents the Lord's paternal care of him, under the ſimilitude of a ſhepherd, conducting, feeding, and defending his ſheep; and he deſcribes the favours which he hoped always to enjoy in communion with God.

REFLECTIONS.

THE happy condition of the faithful, who live in full aſſurance of God's love, and under his protection, is here in a moſt affecting manner ſet before us. *David* ſhews by his own example that they never want; that God protects, comforts, and ſupports them in every condition; that he is with them even in death, and confers his graces and favours upon them in the higheſt degree, cauſing them to live in a bleſſed communion with him. This Pſalm is full of conſolation to true believers; and the deſire of partaking in theſe precious advantages, ſhould teach us all zealouſly to apply ourſelves to the ſtudy of piety.

PSALM XXIV.

I. KING *David* acknowledges God to be the creator of the world, and that he reigns over all things, and particularly over the church. II. He ſhews who are the true members of the church, and by what marks they are diſtinguiſhed. Laſtly, He celebrates the ſtrength and glory of the Almighty King.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hymn contains two leſſons of inſtruction, I. That God, who created the world in the beginning, is the Supreme and Almighty King, whoſe glory and power ought to be celebrated for ever. II. This Pſalm teaches us who they are which God looks upon as his children, and will admit into his glorious preſence. None will be admitted there, but men of pure hands and a clean heart, who are ſincere and faithful in their words and all their behaviour; who avoid fraud and deceit, and call upon the Lord, and ſeek his face with their whole heart. If therefore we deſire to be partakers of God's love, we ſhould examine whether we find in ourſelves theſe characters and ſentiments; endeavouring to produce them in ourſelves if we have them not, and if we have, improving them continually.

PSALM XXV.

IN this Pſalm *David* implores the favour of God with great fervency of devotion; beſeeches him above all things to teach him to walk in his ways and to fear him, to pardon his ſins, and to deliver him from his afflictions. He here likewiſe gives us a beautiful deſcription of true piety, and of the happineſs

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it procures. In this Pſalm there are many very excellent inſtructions, and exalted ſtrains of devotion.

REFLECTIONS.

THE uſe we are to make of this Pſalm is, to take particular notice, I. With what confidence they who truſt in God apply to him, and implore his aſſiſtance in all their neceſſities. II. That what we ought moſt earneſtly to pray for is, that we may be filled with the knowledge of God; that he would teach us to walk in his way, and grant us pardon for all the ſins we have committed. III. We here learn, how valuable it is to fear God, and the advantages it procures us. King *David* has told us, that God makes known his ways to the meek and humble; that he ſhews them that fear him the way that they ſhould chooſe; that to them he reveals his ſecrets and his covenant; that he bleſſes them and their poſterity exceedingly; and when they are in affliction, he protects them, and delivers them out of all their diſtreſs. Theſe are inſtructions of the greateſt uſe and importance; and carefully reading and meditating on theſe things, and frequently offering up to God the excellent prayers contained in this Pſalm, is one of the beſt things we can do to ſtrengthen us more and more in the fear of the Lord, and ſecure our eternal welfare.

PSALM XXVI.

DAVID prays the Lord to ſupport his innocence; he ſays, he always avoided the company of the wicked; and that his greateſt pleaſure was, to ſerve God in his tabernacle; and with theſe diſpoſitions, he hopes that God will not give him up to his enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE firſt inſtruction this Pſalm furniſhes us with is, that God chiefly regards our integrity and ſincerity; that he ſearches and tries the hearts; and therefore, that the only means of obtaining God's favour is to approve ourſelves in his ſight, to live in innocency, to walk in truth, and to hate vice, and the company of the wicked. II. *David*'s earneſt deſire to ſerve God in the tabernacle, ſhould ſtir us up to diſcharge the duties of religion with the ſame fervency, and to take the greateſt delight in going to the houſe of God, there to praiſe him, and to meditate on the wonders of his love. But the care this pious king took to purify himſelf before he went unto the altar of God, ſhould convince us, that in order to appear in the preſence of God, we ſhould be pure and live a holy life. Laſtly, We ſhould join with *David* in the prayer which he offers up to God at the end of this Pſalm, and beſeech him to preſerve us from being like the wicked, leſt we ſhare with them in the puniſhments that are prepared for them.

PSALM XXVII.

I. KING *David* teſtifies his entire confidence in God in the greateſt dangers; his zeal and firm adherence to the true worſhip of the Supreme Being. II. He begs of God to grant him tokens of his favour, and ſeems fully perſuaded that God would never forſake him. In this Pſalm there are many noble ſtrains of devotion, faith, and piety.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Pſalm we are to remark, I. That thoſe who fear God and truſt in him, are never afraid of men; but are calm and unſhaken, even when perſe-

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cuted and reduced to the moſt deplorable condition. II. That the moſt ineſtimable advantage, and the greateſt conſolation we can enjoy in this world is, to meet often in the houſe of God, there to praiſe and adore him, and to receive the teſtimonies of his favour. III. That when God does incline our hearts to ſeek his face, we ſhould improve the mercy, and not ſlight the gracious invitation. Laſtly, *David*'s aſſurance ſhews, that ſhould we be forſaken by all the world, yet God will never forſake us, if we fear him, and depend upon him; that nothing but our truſt in him, and hope in his promiſes, can ſupport us in the midſt of the troubles of this life; and that the expectation of thoſe who ſeek their happineſs in God alone, ſhall never be in vain.

PSALM XXVIII.

KING *David* prays God to defend him from the malice and artifice of his enemies, and from the judgments that ſhould fall upon them. He praiſes him likewiſe for the care he took of him, truſts in his aſſiſtance, and prays for the proſperity of the *Iſraelites*.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to gather from this Pſalm is, I. In all our wants to call upon the Lord, lifting up our hands and hearts to him, to implore his aſſiſtance, beſeeching him not to ſuffer us to be expoſed to the miſeries of the ungodly. II. That God renders to the wicked according to their works; and particularly, deſtroys the double-minded and deceitful men, who ſpeak peace to their neighbours, whilſt their hearts are full of rancour and hatred. III. That what brings men to miſery and deſtruction is their not taking

taking heed to the works of the Lord, that they may learn from thence to fear him. IV. The praiſes which *David* adds to his prayers, ſhew that good men call upon the Lord, entirely relying upon his goodneſs; that God hears thoſe who call upon him, and will always be the ſhield and ſtrength of the righteous, and the protector of his people.

PSALM XXIX.

THIS is an exhortation to acknowledge the majeſty of God, as it appears in all his works; and particular in thunder and lightning. The prophet ſpeaks likewiſe of the protection which God vouchſafed to his people *Iſrael*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reading of this Pſalm engages us to adore with reverence and fear the majeſty of God, which he gives ſo many proofs of in his works. This Pſalm teaches us in particular, that God by his power produces the thunder which is heard in the air, and its ſurpriſing effects; that he preſides over all ſuch events, and that his providence makes uſe of them to exerciſe his judgments, and to make known his greatneſs to mankind. Thus ſhould we take occaſion from the works of nature to fear God, and to put our whole truſt in him, remembering that he is the Lord and judge of the world, and exerts his power to puniſh thoſe who offend him, as he employs it at other times for the good of his people and of all his children.

PSALM XXX.

IN this Pſalm *David* returns ſolemn thanks to God that he had delivered him, and made his wrath give way to his mercy. He acknowledges that he had

had in prosperity forgot himself, and therefore God had chastened him, to bring him again to a sense of his duty, and to induce him to call upon him with greater fervency; and he vows he will praise God for ever because he had heard him. It is thought this Psalm relates to what *David* did when he returned to *Jerusalem* after the conspiracy of *Absalom*, to purge his house which had been defiled by that unnatural son.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS religious song of thanksgiving is particularly adapted to persons that have escaped some great danger. Those whom God has thus delivered, ought, in imitation of *David*, to celebrate his goodness, and to invite all men to celebrate it with them; acknowledging that *his anger endureth but a moment, and that in his favour is life.* But above all, we ought to take notice of the instructions here given us concerning the usefulness of affliction. *David* observes, *That when he was in prosperity, he said, he should never be moved; but as soon as God had hid his face, he was troubled*; and that then he cryed to the Lord and was heard by him. Let this convince us of the use and necessity of afflictions. Even the best of men sometimes forget themselves in prosperity; but God makes use of adversity to inspire them with a holy fear, to bring them to a sense of their duty, and to oblige them to have recourse to him; and then he is reconciled and hears their cry, changing their sorrow into joy, and their complaints into songs of praise. This is a doctrine of general use, and deserves our most serious meditation, that if God grants us rest, we may not abuse it; and if he sends us adversity, it may serve to humble us, and draw us more effectually unto him.

PSALM

PSALM XXXI.

KING *David* prays God, that as he truſted in him, he would be pleaſed to defend him againſt the evils he endured from his enemies, and even from his neareſt friends; and being perſuaded that his prayer ſhould be heard, he rejoices in the deliverance which he expected from the goodneſs of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE confidence which *David* in this Pſalm ſeems to be inſpired with, and the prayers which he here addreſſes to his Almighty Protector, ſhew, that the children of God, full of confidence in the divine goodneſs, draw nigh to him in all their wants, and are never diſappointed in their hopes. Let us imitate *David* in his piety and confidence in God, recommend ourſelves continually to his protection, and always have this prayer in our hearts; *Into thy hand I commit my ſpirit; for thou haſt redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.* II. The evils and perſecutions which *David* ſuffered, even from his neareſt relations, and the manner in which he ſubmitted to theſe ſevere trials, prove, that if we are expoſed to ſufferings, we ought to bear them patiently, without entertaining any malice or hatred in our hearts againſt thoſe who injure us, not reſenting the evils they do us, but waiting with reſignation for the divine aſſiſtance. Obſerve, laſtly, in this Pſalm, how *David* is tranſported with the ſenſe of God's favours towards thoſe that fear him, and of the greatneſs of thoſe good things he lays up in ſtore for them. Let all that fear God conſider this for their comfort; and let this conſideration encourage them more and more to obey and pleaſe him. The exhortation which concludes this hymn, naturally tends

tends to produce this effect; *O love the Lord, all ye his ſaints, for the Lord preſerves the faithful; be of good courage, and he ſhall ſtrengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.*

PSALM XXXII.

I. THIS doctrinal Pſalm teaches us, that man's true happineſs conſiſts in the pardon of his ſins, and in the purity of his conſcience; and that this favour is obtained by a ſincere confeſſion of ſin, and by truly returning to God. II. *David* exhorts men to make a good uſe of this doctrine, and to take heed not to harden their hearts; threatning the wicked with the greateſt miſeries, and promiſing complete happineſs to the righteous.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE muſt make the ſame reflection upon the firſt words of this Pſalm, as St. *Paul* does in the fourth chapter of the epiſtle to the *Romans*; which is, that the happineſs of man, and his juſtification before God, conſiſts in the pardon of ſins, in peace of conſcience, and a ſenſe of God's mercy. II. King *David* teaches us, that if we deſire to attain this happy condition, we muſt have a clean heart, and a pure conſcience; that the remiſſion of ſins is the effect of God's mercy; that in order to obtain it, we muſt ſincerely confeſs and forſake our ſins, which as ſoon as we confeſs and forſake them, are blotted out, and God reſtores us to a ſenſe of his grace and favour. III. It appears from this Pſalm, that a true penitent, when he has received pardon for ſins, does not only praiſe God for his own happineſs, but endeavours, as much as in him lies, to bring other men to repentance and converſion. This is the direct tendency of thoſe exhortations and inſtructions we read at the end of this Pſalm,

Pſalm, wherein *David* warns us not to harden our hearts, as ſinners do; and aſſures us, *That many ſorrows ſhall be to the wicked; but he that truſteth in the Lord, mercy ſhall encompaſs him about: and that thoſe who are righteous, ſhall rejoice and be glad in the Lord; and all that are upright of heart ſhall ſhout for joy.*

PSALM XXXIII.

I. *DAVID* exhorts the righteous to praiſe God with heart and voice, from the conſideration of his goodneſs, righteouſneſs and power, which appear in the works of creation and providence. II. He repreſents God as ſeeing all things, examining the actions of men, and diſplaying his mercy towards thoſe that fear him, and truſt in him.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm engages us to make theſe five reflections. I. That it is a duty highly reaſonable as well as delightful to praiſe God: but that none but upright men can diſcharge it in a becoming manner; and that the praiſe of God is only proper in their mouths. II. That we ought to praiſe God, becauſe he has created the world by his almighty power, and becauſe he governs it wiſely and juſtly by his providence. III. That if it was a great advantage to the *Iſraelites*, to be the people whom God had choſen for his inheritance, and who were in a peculiar manner protected by him; the favour which God has vouchſafed us, in admitting us into his church, and entering into covenant with us, is a ſtill more glorous privilege. IV. That God has a perfect knowledge of all that paſſes in the world, and in particular that he ſees all the actions and thoughts of men, which is expreſſed

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in theſe words, *The Lord looketh from heaven, he beholdeth all the ſons of men; from the place of his habitation, he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth, and conſidereth all their works.* This thought ſhould continually poſſeſs our ſouls, that the conſideration of the preſence of God, and of his infinite knowledge, may engage us to walk before him in holineſs and righteouſneſs. Laſtly, Since *David* has told us, *That the eyes of the Lord are upon thoſe that fear him, and upon them that hope in his mercy*; let us obſerve from thence, that the true way to have God our friend is to truſt in him, to fear him, without ceaſing to apply to him for mercy; and to this end, to pray continually in the words of the prophet, *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.*

PSALM XXXIV.

I. IN this Pſalm of thankſgiving, which is likewiſe doctrinal, *David* praiſes God for delivering him, when he was diſcovered by the *Philiſtines* in the city of *Gath.* II. He repreſents God's care and protection of his children, the advantages which the fear of God procures them, and the fatal lot of the wicked. The whole is expreſſed in this Pſalm with particular ſtrength and beauty.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm is deſervedly eſteemed one of the nobleſt and moſt edifying. King *David* here informs us by his inſtructions and example, I. That when God grants us any deliverance, or any other favour, we ought to expreſs our gratitude, not only by our own thankfulneſs, but by inviting others likewiſe to praiſe him with us. II. That the Lord never fails to hear and deliver the righteous who call upon him

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in their diſtreſs, and employs even angels for their defence. III. *David* in this Pſalm ſeems thoroughly affected with a ſenſe of God's goodneſs, and the happineſs which thoſe experience who are partakers of his love; and deſcribes, in a beautiful manner, the nature of piety, exhorting the ſaints to live always in the fear of the Lord, to be ſincere in their words and actions, to fly from evil, do good, and ſeek peace. Laſtly, the Pſalmiſt ſets before us, the ineſtimable benefits and advantages of holineſs, ſince they that fear the Lord can lack nothing; his eyes being always over the righteous, his ears open to their cries, and if they are expoſed to many misfortunes, he delivers them from them all at the laſt; whereas he ſets his face againſt the wicked for their deſtruction. Nothing can be of greater uſe, than continually to call to mind theſe divine and excellent leſſons, to have them continually before our eyes and in our hearts; to which end we muſt frequently read this admirable Pſalm, and make a conſtant uſe of it for our edification and comfort.

PSALM XXXV.

DAVID implores the divine aſſiſtance againſt his enemies, whoſe malice, injuſtice, ingratitude and cruelty, he deſcribes. He mentions his own innocence, and the manner in which he behaved himſelf towards them: he threatens their ruin; and bleſſes God beforehand for the deliverance he expected from his power and goodneſs.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may collect in general from this Pſalm, that God defends good men; that the wicked, and ſuch as perſecute the faithful, are expoſed to his vengeance; and that it is the duty of the righteous to rejoice

joice in God, when his glory is promoted by their deliverance. But we muſt not conclude from what *David* ſays here againſt his enemies, that we are allowed to wiſh evil to thoſe who injure us, or rejoice when any evil happens to them. We are to remember, that the enemies of *David* were enemies to God himſelf; and that *David*, as a prophet, and one who had an expreſs promiſe of the divine aſſiſtance, might denounce deſtruction againſt thoſe who oppoſed him. However, in reality, he was ſo far from wiſhing them any evil, that he was even afflicted at the evil which did befal them, as he himſelf teſtifies in this Pſalm, wherein he declares he had behaved towards them as if they had been his friends and his brethren. Theſe ſentiments ſuit ſtill better with Chriſtians, who know that the Laws of the Goſpel oblige them to love all men, even thoſe who hate them, to do them good, and pray for them, in conformity to the precepts and example of our Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*.

PSALM XXXVI.

DAVID does two things in this Pſalm, I. He deſcribes the impiety and malice of the wicked. II. He celebrates the goodneſs of God towards his creatures in general, and particularly the excellence of thoſe good things he beſtows upon them that fear him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN this Pſalm we have a deſcription of the ſentiments and behaviour of the wicked and ungodly, who have no fear of God before their eyes, but flatter themſelves, and are confirmed more and more in their wickedneſs, and without any dread of evil ſeek only to hurt others. II. *David* here obſerves,

that the righteous have very different ſentiments; that they adore the power and juſtice of God, manifeſted in his works and all his judgments; that they are tranſported with the conſideration of his immenſe goodneſs, and the favours he beſtows on thoſe who love him and put their truſt in him. The reading of this Pſalm teaches us to avoid all impiety, and to cleave ſtedfaſtly to God by a ſincere love and holy fear, that we may rejoice in him with righteouſneſs, and ſay with *David*, *O God, how precious is thy goodneſs! the children of men hide themſelves under the ſhadow of thy wings. We ſhall be ſatisfied with the fatneſs of thy houſe, and thou ſhalt give us to drink of the rivers of thy pleaſures.*

PSALM XXXVII.

THE deſign of this inſtructive Pſalm is, to ſhew that we ſhould not be ſurpriſed if the wicked are ſometimes happy in this life, and if good men are in afflictions. *David* proves, that ſooner or later God fails not to deliver good men, and to reward their piety, and to make wicked men feel the effects of his wrath. This Pſalm contains admirable inſtructions, and ſuch as are very powerful to engage us to fear God, and to turn us away from evil; wherefore we ought to read and meditate upon it with great attention.

REFLECTIONS.

THE ſum of the doctrine contained in this Pſalm is, that we ought not to envy the happineſs which the wicked enjoy in this world, nor be offended at the afflictions of good men. We are to obſerve here, that injuſtice, hatred, and malice againſt the righteous, ſelf-conceit, pride, violence and impiety, make up the

the character of the wicked; that, on the contrary, good men truſt in the Lord, and are continually doing good, place their whole happineſs in him, are always quiet, meek and humble, love to give, and to exerciſe charity, and their diſcourſe is full of wiſdom and edification. *David* aſſures us, that ſuch men are bleſſed and protected of God; that true happineſs is their lot; that the divine favour extends to them and their poſterity; that if they are ſometimes in affliction, in their trials they experience the divine aſſiſtance, and have a happy iſſue out of all their troubles. It is not ſo with the ungodly; their proſperity is only imaginary, and of ſhort duration; God confounds their unjuſt deſigns, and his anger, in a very ſenſible manner, falls upon them, and all that belongs to them. Every day's experience verifies what this Pſalm teaches; and therefore the effect which the reading of it ſhould produce, is, to convince us, that our whole happineſs depends on our perſeverance in piety, which is attended with ſuch ſure and glorious rewards.

PSALM XXXVIII.

IN this devout prayer *David* beſeeches the Lord not to correct him in his anger. He complains of the puniſhments he ſuffered for his ſins, and of his being forſaken by his friends, and perſecuted by his enemies, and gives proofs of his humility, piety, and truſt in God.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm offers to our conſideration theſe four things: I. It repreſents to us the ſentiments of a penitent ſinner, humbled under the load of his ſins, and a ſenſe of the divine diſpleaſure: theſe ſentiments are expreſſed in this prayer; *O Lord, rebuke me not in*

thy wrath, nor chaſten me in thy hot diſpleaſure. II. What is ſaid in this Pſalm is very proper for the inſtruction and conſolation of thoſe who are afflicted with pains and diſeaſes, or in any other manner: *David* teaches them by his own example to look upon the evils that befal them, how ſevere ſoever they be, as a juſt correction for their ſins, and to aſk God pardon for them. III. If they ſuffer by the malice and injuſtice of men, they ſhould imitate *David* in his humility, patience, and meekneſs, and wait with reſignation till God, who never forſakes the innocent, is pleaſed to deliver them. IV. We learn from *David*'s complaints of the cruelty and injuſtice of his enemies, that thoſe who afflict the innocent, rejoice in other mens misfortunes, and return evil for good, ſhall not eſcape the juſt judgment of God.

PSALM XXXIX.

I. *DAVID* declares in this Pſalm, that he had made a firm reſolution not to murmur at the proſperity of the wicked, nor his own ſufferings. II. He obſerves, that he had overcome this temptation by conſidering the ſhortneſs of this life, and the vanity of the good things of this world. III. He beſeeches God to pardon his ſins, and deliver him from his afflictions, and humbly ſubmits to the chaſtiſements that God had ſent him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS Pſalm contains an excellent doctrine; which is, that the way never to fall into murmuring, nor to ſuffer ourſelves to be tempted or offended when we ſee the temporal proſperity of the wicked, is, to repreſent to ourſelves the ſhortneſs of our lives, the inſignificancy of the good things of this

this world, and the vanity of mens labours for earthly things. II. *David* teaches us, that God can put an end to our lives when he pleaſes, and deprive us of all our advantages; that we are only ſtrangers and ſojourners here below; and that the only remedy for the miſeries and vanity of human life is, to put all our hope in the Lord, to aſk his aſſiſtance, and pardon of our ſins, and to ſubmit with reſignation to his holy will; ſaying, when he afflicts us, *I became dumb, and opened not my mouth, becauſe thou didſt it.* With ſuch thoughts as theſe, we are ſure to be eaſy and happy; we may rely upon God, and praiſe him, and rejoice in him, both in proſperity and adverſity.

PSALM XL.

I. THE prophet *David* praiſes God for the deliverances and favours he had received from his goodneſs, devotes himſelf to his ſervice, and acknowledges, that by ſubmiſſion to the will of God, rather than by ſacrifices, he hoped to be accepted. II. He makes a vow to praiſe God in the moſt public manner, and beſeeches him to aſſiſt him in his afflictions and dangers; and, above all, to deliver him from his ſins.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm contains extraordinary ſtrains of piety and gratitude. We here obſerve the ſentiments of a heart full of confidence, and affected with a lively ſenſe of God's mercies, with a profound humility, and an ardent deſire to be entirely devoted to him. Therefore the inſtructions we here meet with are theſe: I. That in our afflictions, we ought to wait patiently for the Lord, who, though he delay for a time, will come at laſt to the aſſiſtance of thoſe that hope in him.

II. That the true happineſs of man conſiſts in chooſing the Lord for his refuge, without ſeeking for it in men, or in the things of the world. III. That the mercies of God towards us are ſo many in number, that we cannot reckon them, nor celebrate them as they deſerve. IV. That what God chiefly requires of us is, that we ſhould ſubmit ourſelves to him without reſerve; ſaying, *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; thy law is within my heart:* and that we ſhould publiſh his praiſes and his truth before all the world. We ſee in this Pſalm, that this is the only ſervice that is pleaſing to God; and that when we are in this condition, we may call upon him with a full aſſurance of his aſſiſtance. Laſtly, We muſt conſider that *David* ſpeaks in this Pſalm, as the type of *Jeſus Chriſt*, when he ſays, *Sacrifice and offering thou didſt not deſire, but mine ears haſt thou opened. Then ſaid I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God.* St. *Paul* applies theſe words to our Lord in the Epiſtle of the *Hebrews*, and remarks, that by *Jeſus Chriſt*'s oblation and ſacrifice of himſelf, we are ſanctified and dedicated to God. This affords us a powerful motive to celebrate the infinite love of our Redeemer, to devote ourſelves to the Lord, and conform in all things to his will.

PSALM XLI.

DAVID promiſes particular bleſſings to thoſe who behave themſelves charitably towards the afflicted, and complains of the cruelty of his enemies, and even of his friends, who, inſtead of compaſſionating his miſeries, wiſhed for his death, and ſaid, that God puniſhed him for his ſins.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Pſalm, the bleſſing of God is promiſed to thoſe who have compaſſion on the afflicted, who judge charitably of them, and comfort them in their ſufferings. *David* aſſures the kind and charitable, that God will deliver them in their calamities, that he will heal them when they are ſick and languiſhing, and that he will preſerve them, and make them happy in this life. Theſe promiſes ought to inſpire us with ſentiments of charity, and compaſſion for the unfortunate, and engage us to comfort them, and contribute to their eaſe as far as we are able. On the other hand, what *David* ſays of the proceedings of his enemies, ſhews us, that it is a great ſin to inſult the miſerable, to wiſh evil to or deſire the death of any one, and to judge that all thoſe whom God afflicts are puniſhed becauſe of their ſins. This ſhould teach us to avoid hard-heartedneſs and raſh judgments, and to think always favourably of people in affliction, and eſpecially of thoſe who are remarkable for piety, and the fear of the Lord.

PSALM XLII.

THE prophet expreſſes, with great ſtrength and energy, his unfeigned ſorrow to ſee himſelf baniſhed from the houſe of God, by the perſecution of his enemies, and his hearty deſire to return to it again, that he might ſerve God among the faithful; he likewiſe deſcribes his alarms, and the conflict he had within himſelf, which he had overcome by confidence in the divine aſſiſtance.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the earneſt deſire of the prophetic author of this Pſalm, who was probably *David*, to come again to the houſe of God, which he was kept from, we

ſee what ſentiments true devotion and ſincere piety inſpire men with. The faithful deſire nothing more ſincerely, than to appear before God, and particularly, to worſhip in the aſſemblies of the ſaints, and to be edified by the company and good examples of godly men. In like manner, there is nothing grieves them more than to be deprived of that comfort, and to ſee the wicked impiouſly inſult God, and ſcoff at the juſt man's truſt in him. Obſerve next, that the author of this Pſalm had been in exceeding great diſtreſs, and as it were ſinking under the afflicting hand of God; in which condition his ſoul was diſtracted, and almoſt deſtitute of comfort; but that, nevertheleſs, his faith had raiſed and comforted him. This example ought to ſtrengthen the righteous in their afflictions, comfort them in their greateſt bitterneſs of ſoul, and make them ſay with *David, Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul? And why art thou diſquieted within me? Hope in God, for I ſhall yet praiſe him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

PSALM XLIII.

IN this Pſalm, as well as the foregoing, the Pſalmiſt, perſecuted and driven from the tabernacle, begs God to deliver him from his enemies, and reſtore him the valuable bleſſing of ſerving and praiſing God in public, and comforts himſelf with the proſpect of his aſſiſtance.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reading of this Pſalm ſhews, that if the prophet begged of God to deliver him from the malice of his enemies, it was chiefly with a view to return to the tabernacle, that he might praiſe God, and expreſs his joy, love, and gratitude. This the children

children of God desire above all things, and this it is that supports and comforts them most effectually in all their trials and afflictions. Lastly, The complaints and sighs of the prophet, in this and the foregoing Psalms, because he could not come into the house of God, should engage those who have the liberty to serve God in the religious assemblies, gladly to improve so inestimable a blessing.

PSALM XLIV.

THIS Psalm was composed at a time when the people of *Israel* were under affliction and persecution. The prophet here makes mention of the wonders God had wrought in bringing their forefathers into the land of *Canaan*, from whence he hopes that God would again display his power in behalf of the afflicted *Israelites*, and deliver them. He describes the sad condition they were in at that time, and the severe persecutions to which they were exposed.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE *Israelites* in their afflictions call to remembrance the many signal blessings which God had formerly conferred upon that nation. Thus should we, in our afflictions, comfort ourselves with the consideration of the goodness of the Lord, and the evident proofs he has in all ages given of his power and mercy. II. As the *Jews* acknowledged that their fathers had become masters of the land of *Canaan*, not by their own strength, but by the power of God; we should likewise give God the glory of all the privileges and blessings we enjoy, and confess that his favour is the happiness and security of nations, and particularly of the church. III. The complaints the *Jews* make of their deplorable condition, shew, that in

in all times the church has been afflicted; and that God often permits his people to be delivered into the hands of the wicked, and the faithful to be cruelly perſecuted. This is St. *Paul*'s reflection, in the eighth chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, where he applies to Chriſtians theſe words of this Pſalm; *For thy ſake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as ſheep for the ſlaughter.* God permits it ſo to be for the glory of his name, and to try and purify his church. Laſtly, We ſee here, that the faithful, though God afflicts them, do not forget him, nor forſake his covenant; and therefore he is always ready to come to their aſſiſtance, and to hear them when they call upon him in time of need.

PSALM XLV.

THIS Pſalm is a nuptial ſong upon the marriage of king *Solomon*, and contains a deſcription of the glory of that prince and his conſort; it is likewiſe a prophetical Pſalm, and relates to our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm is to be conſidered in two lights, I. As a hymn deſigned to procure the divine bleſſing upon the marriage of *Solomon*, and upon his kingdom. II. As it properly relates to *Jeſus Chriſt*, the huſband and king of the church. In this Pſalm there is expreſs mention made of his divinity, of his anointing, of his power, of the glory and duration of his kingdom. This St. *Paul* teaches us, in the firſt chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, where he applies to our Lord the words of this Pſalm: *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a ſceptre of righteouſneſs is the ſceptre of thy kingdom; God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with*

with the oil of gladneſs above thy fellows. Theſe words can properly ſuit no other but *Chriſt Jeſus*; and as they deſcribe his infinite power and glory, they engage us to reverence and adore him, and in all things to ſubmit to him, that we may ſhare in the bleſſings he pours upon his church, and upon all thoſe who have the happineſs to live under his dominion.

PSALM XLVI.

THIS is a Pſalm of thankſgiving, for the aſſiſtance God had granted his people, at a time when they had been attacked by ſeveral nations.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to learn from hence, that God is the protector of his church, and that even when kings and nations, who are repreſented in this Pſalm by floods and torrents, are confederate againſt it, God renders all their efforts vain, and powerfully delivers it. The Chriſtian church has ſtill greater ſhare in theſe promiſes and the divine protection than the antient people had, ſince this is for ever to ſubſiſt. This the church has always experienced; this the faithful ſhould conſider for their comfort, and the confirmation of their faith.

PSALM XLVII.

THE prophet exhorts all the inhabitants of the earth to praiſe God, to adore his majeſty and power, and acknowledge, that the Lord, who had made a covenant with the children of *Iſrael*, was the king of the world, and that all the people ought to ſubmit themſelves to him.

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REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm ſhould excite us to praiſe God, and to celebrate his glory with holy tranſports, as he is the king of the whole earth, and deſerves the adoration of all men; but above all, becauſe he has choſen us to be his people and his inheritance. What we read in this Pſalm is particularly applicable to the times of the Goſpel, and eſpecially to our Lord's triumphant aſcenſion to the glory of his kingdom, and to the happineſs which the ſeveral nations of the earth now enjoy in being accounted the people of God.

PSALM XLVIII.

IN this Pſalm, which was compoſed upon occaſion of ſome deliverance that God had granted the city of *Jeruſalem*, the prophet praiſes God for defeating the counſels and attempts of the kings who had aſſaulted that city; and he deſcribes the ſtrength of *Jeruſalem*, and God's protection of his people.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflection we are to make upon this Pſalm is, that the church has often been attacked by the kings and nations of the world, who had conſpired together to deſtroy it; but that God has always watched over it, and rendered all the conſpiracies of its enemies vain, and turned them to their own confuſion. This Pſalm aſſures us very expreſly, that the church is the deareſt thing to God upon earth; that he dwells in the midſt of it; that he encompaſſes it with his protection; and that he will always ſupport it. Theſe promiſes are ſtill better ſuited to the Chriſtian than to the *Jewiſh* church, and ought to convince us of our happineſs, in being members of Chriſt's church, and fill

fill all ſincere Chriſtians with ſtedfaſt hope and confidence in God.

PSALM XLIX.

IN this Pſalm, which is doctrinal and inſtructive, the prophet proves, by ſeveral conſiderations, that the happineſs of man does not conſiſt in the riches and honours of the world; that thoſe who place their glory and their happineſs in them, are fools and madmen; and therefore, that we ought not to ſet our hearts upon theſe things, neither fearing nor envying ſuch as poſſeſs them; but that we ſhould put our truſt in God alone, who can render happy, even after death, thoſe who fear him, and put their whole truſt in him.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are many very important reflections to be made on this Pſalm. It teaches us, that ſuch as truſt in their goods and riches, or that are puffed up with their honours and credit, are fools and blind. We have here repreſented the vanity and folly of the projects and ſchemes laid by worldly men for their own advancement, and the glory of their families. The prophet remarks, that God makes all their ſchemes abortive; that death robs them of all their glory; that they become a prey to the grave; and that their riches cannot redeem their ſouls, nor ſecure them from death and the judgment of God. Laſtly, This Pſalm teaches us, that it is not ſo with thoſe that put their truſt in God, ſince they are ſure that he will redeem them, even from death, and will take them to himſelf to all eternity. High and low ought to attend to and meditate on theſe inſtructions, as the prophet exhorts them; thoſe who are rich, or in an exalted ſtation, ſhould remember them, leſt they for-

get

get God, and fall into pride; and people of mean rank, ſhould learn from hence never to envy the glory, riches, and proſperity, which fall to the lot of others; and all in general are here taught to wean their affections from the world, and to ſeek their happineſs wholly in the favour and love of God.

PSALM L.

THE deſign of this Pſalm is, to reprove the hypocriſy of the *Iſraelites*, who placed their confidence in ſacrifices and ceremonial obſervances, whilſt they neglected to obſerve the moſt eſſential duties of religion. I. God here ſpeaks to his people, and declares, that he regarded not ſacrifices and external worſhip, but that the ſervice he requires, conſiſts in praiſing and calling upon him with ſincerity. II. He ſeverely reproves hypocrites who profeſs to live in covenant with him, and to ſerve him, and yet give themſelves up to ſin; he denounces his judgments againſt them, and exhorts them to true repentance.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm, which is very inſtructive, teaches us, that the ſervice of God does not conſiſt in outward duties, ſuch as were the antient ſacrifices, and ſuch as now are acts of public worſhip, ceremonies, and the outward profeſſion of religion. Indeed theſe duties are indiſpenſable, and ought not to be neglected, ſince God has appointed them, and that they are agreeable to him, when diſcharged as they ought to be. However, the true worſhip which God requires, is to ſerve him in ſpirit and in truth, to praiſe him, to call upon him, and to do his will. As for thoſe who profeſs to ſerve God, to take his covenant in their

their mouths, and who, nevertheleſs, abandon themſelves to ſin, and particularly to injuſtice, impurity, deceit, and ſlander; we ſee here, that God cannot endure their hypocriſy, and that if he does not puniſh them immediately, they muſt not imagine they ſhall eſcape his judgment. Sinners and falſe Chriſtians ſhould carefully improve to their advantage what is ſaid in this Pſalm; and all of us ought ſeriouſly to reflect upon it, that we may not offend God by an hypocritical worſhip, but calling upon him with ſincerity, and ſtudying, above all things, to do what he commandeth, may render to him ſuch ſervice as ſhall be acceptable in his ſight, and procure his favour towards us.

PSALM LI.

THIS is king *David*'s penitential Pſalm, wherein he implores the mercy of God with great zeal and humility; makes confeſſion of his ſin; and prays to God to renew him by his ſpirit, and to reſtore to him peace of conſcience; that having recovered his favour, he may praiſe him, and become an example to ſinners. He hopes God will approve his repentance, and offers up prayers for the welfare of *Jeruſalem*, and proſperity of the *Iſraelites*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm is one of thoſe that are of the moſt general uſe, and in which we may beſt obſerve the motions and characters of true repentance. Herein we diſcover, I. The lively ſenſe *David* had of his ſin, his humble and public confeſſion of it before God and man, and his recourſe to the mercy of God. II. We here obſerve, that *David* does not only pray God to pardon his ſins, but likewiſe to deliver him from them, and grant him his ſpirit to purify and renew him. III. We here ſee the promiſes he makes

to

to return to the ways of godlineſs, and by his example and inſtructions to convert ſinners. IV. *David* expreſſes his hope and confidence that God will not reject his repentance. Laſtly, After he had prayed for himſelf, he intreats God to continue his bleſſing upon *Jeruſalem*, and his whole kingdom. It appears from this Pſalm, that it is the duty of ſinners, and particularly thoſe that have fallen into great ſins, to be ſenſible of the greatneſs of them, humbly to acknowledge and confeſs them, and even publickly before men, when it is neceſſary; earneſtly to implore the mercy of God with true contrition, and to beg of him a ſincere converſion, and the aſſiſtance of his ſpirit, that they may never more fall into ſin. Laſtly, A penitent ſinner, that is truly humbled for his ſins, finds himſelf indiſpenſably obliged to repair the ſcandal he has given, and contribute his utmoſt towards the converſion of other ſinners, and the edification of all, by his example, by his exhortations, and by his prayers. This is the only way to obtain pardon for the ſins we have committed, and to procure peace of conſcience, and the renewal of the grace of God.

PSALM LII.

DAVID denounces the judgments of God againſt one of *Saul*'s counſellors, named *Doeg*, who, by his ſlanders, had exaſperated *Saul* againſt him, and had occaſioned the death of a great number of the prieſts, who were cruelly ſlain by *Saul*. For the right underſtanding of this Pſalm, it is convenient to read the hiſtory related in the twenty-ſecond chapter of the Firſt Book of *Samuel*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may gather from this Pſalm, I. That the wicked, and particularly cruel men and ſlanderers,

derers, ſuch as *Doeg* was, receive from God the puniſhment they deſerve; and that God abhors lying and calumny. II. That thoſe who truſt in their riches, or in their addreſs, become examples of the juſt judgment of God; whilſt he beſtows his favour on thoſe that put their truſt in him, and walk in his ways.

PSALM LIII.

I. THE prophet deſcribes the extreme impiety and general corruption of the time in which he lived. II. He threatens the wicked with divine vengeance, and promiſes the righteous help and deliverance from the Almighty.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT *David* ſays at the beginning of this Pſalm, *The fool has ſaid in his heart there is no God*, does not imply, that all ſinners actually believe there is no God; but the meaning of theſe words, as the prophet himſelf explains them, is, that their impiety was ſo great and ſo general, that wicked men lived as if they denied the being of a God. The complaint which *David* here makes of the impiety of the men of his age, may be applied to a great number of Chriſtians, who profeſs to know God, but in works deny him, giving themſelves up to all manner of impiety. II. It appears, however, from the evils which *David* ſays the righteous are expoſed to by means of the ungodly, and from the promiſes made to the godly in afflictions, that when the corruption is moſt general, God has always ſome true worſhippers, who lament this corruption, endeavour to keep themſelves free from the infection, and in the midſt of the diſorders that prevail, always look up to God, and

put their truſt in him. III. This Pſalm engages us to conſider further, that God beholds from heaven the ſins which are committed; that he will puniſh them; and that thoſe who dread not his power, ſhall one day have terror and conſternation for their portion. Laſtly, It ſhould be remarked, that St. *Paul*, in the third chapter of his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, quotes this Pſalm, to prove that the *Jews* were ſinners as well as the Heathen; that conſequently, they could not be juſtified by the law of *Moſes*, but only by faith in *Jeſus Chriſt*.

PSALM LIV.

KING *Saul* being informed by the men of *Zipb* that *David* was retired into their country, and going thither to take him, *David* prays God to defend him from thoſe that ſought his death, and he promiſes to praiſe and bleſs him when he granted his requeſt. The event which gave occaſion to this prayer, is recorded in the twenty-third and twenty-ſixth chapters of the Firſt Book of *Samuel*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Pſalm *David* does three things, I. He implores the divine aſſiſtance in the danger that threatned him. II. He expreſſes a firm reliance upon God. III. He promiſes to praiſe him for ever. The Royal Prophet teaches us by his example, that prayer ſhould always be our refuge in the time of danger; that even when men have conſpired our ruin, if we call upon the Lord with a pure heart, he will protect us; and that when he has heard us we ought to bleſs him with all our heart, and make grateful acknowledgments.

PSALM

PSALM LV.

DAVID, fearing he ſhould fall into the hands of his enemies, calls upon the Lord, and repreſents the extreme danger he was in. He complains, that he had been betrayed and ſlandered by thoſe very men which he had ſhewn the greateſt friendſhip to, and had confided moſt in. However, he comforts himſelf with hopes that God would not forſake him, but would deſtroy thoſe that ſought his ruin.

REFLECTIONS.

THE example of *David* ſhews, I. That the faithful may be perſecuted by wicked men, and even ſometimes hated by thoſe whoſe aſſiſtance they had reaſon to expect. II. That in this condition they apply themſelves to God with confidence, and are aſſured he will ſupport them, and reſtrain the malice of thoſe who unjuſtly perſecute them. However, we muſt take care not to make an ill uſe of this Pſalm, and ſome others of the like nature, by applying what *David* ſays againſt his perſecutors to the occaſions which we may have of complaining againſt others, for any uneaſineſs or diſpleaſure which we may be expoſed to by them. The offences we receive are generally ſpeaking trifling; and if not, a Chriſtian is bound to forgive all, and to hate no man; and ſhould be ſo far from making imprecations againſt any, that he ought to pray for thoſe who do him the greateſt injury, herein conforming to the laws of the Goſpel, and to that pattern of patience and meekneſs which our Lord has given us in his life and death.

PSALM LVI.

DAVID having been taken by the *Philiſtines* in the city of *Gath*, as we read in the twenty-firſt chapter of the Firſt Book of *Samuel*, prays the Lord to have pity on him in that preſſing danger; and to his prayer joins praiſes and thankſgivings, which ſhew the great truſt he put in God.

REFLECTIONS.

BY the example of *David* we are here taught, that whatever extremity the children of God are in, and when even force and artifice are imployed againſt them, they are not moved; that their truſt in God is ſo firm, that they do not fear what man can do unto them; and that even before their deliverance, they rejoice in the Lord, and pay him their vows and thankſgivings. *David* aſſures us likewiſe, that the ſufferings of the righteous are precious in the ſight of God, that he ſees their troubles and afflictions, and that *he puts their tears into his bottle.* This is an ineſtimable bleſſing which piety procures for us, and is the greateſt comfort in our adverſities.

PSALM LVII.

DAVID flying before *Saul*, and being hid in a cave, where he was ſurpriſed by *Saul*, as we read in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Firſt Book of *Samuel*, offers up this prayer to God, in which he calls upon him for his help, and ſhews the firm confidence he had in his protection.

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REFLECTIONS.

WE find in this, as in the preceding Pſalms, that *David*, animated by his piety, and ſupported by his faith, always applied to God for deliverance in the dangers that threatned him. Though we are not expoſed to dangers like thoſe of *David* formerly, and therefore cannot apply to ourſelves all we read in this Pſalm, we may nevertheleſs from hence conclude in general, that in our neceſſities we ſhould draw nigh to God, and hide ourſelves under the ſhadow of his wings; being fully perſuaded, that he will not fail to ſend us help from heaven, and to deliver us. But that we may thus truſt in him, we muſt always adhere ſtedfaſtly to our duty, and never make uſe of any unworthy means to extricate ourſelves from any preſſing difficulties; herein imitating *David*, who when he had it in his power to take away *Saul*'s life, when that king came into the cave where he was, would not do it. Laſtly, As *David* at the end of the Pſalm praiſes the Lord with holy tranſports of joy; ſo is it our duty, after we have experienced the divine aſſiſtance, to thank and praiſe his holy name, and every where publiſh his goodneſs towards us.

PSALM LVIII.

I. THIS is a complaint of *David* againſt wicked judges, whoſe impiety and obſtinacy to do evil he here deſcribes. II. He likewiſe foretels, that the divine vengeance ſhould quickly overtake and entirely deſtroy them. It is probable *David* here ſpeaks of the counſellors of *Saul*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS is a Pſalm which thoſe in public offices ought to take good notice of, becauſe it teaches them, that if they do not adminiſter ſtrict juſtice, if

they oppreſs the innocent with artifice or violence, the vengeance of God will overtake them. And in general, we ſee here, that all thoſe who harden themſelves in their evil ways, without hearkening to the voice of God, are likewiſe threatned with his vengeance. Laſtly, We learn from this Pſalm, that Providence governs all things righteouſly; and though the wicked proſper, and good men are afflicted for a while, yet they will always have reaſon to acknowledge, *That there is a reward for the righteous, and that there is a God who judges in the earth.*

PSALM LIX.

DAVID, in danger of being taken by ſome perſons whom *Saul* had ſent to his houſe for that purpoſe, repreſents to the Lord the great danger he was in; not doubting but God would deliver him from his enemies, reſtrain their malice, and make them examples to all the world. The hiſtory which gave occaſion to this Pſalm, is contained in the nineteenth chapter of the Firſt Book of *Samuel.*

REFLECTIONS.

THAT we may improve by the reading of this Pſalm, it is proper to make theſe two reflections. I. That *David*'s prayers were heard, and that Providence furniſhed him with means of eſcaping the fury of *Saul*, who ſought his life; from whence we learn, that the prayers of the faithful, and their confidence in God, is never in vain. II. It is to be obſerved, that what *David* ſays in this Pſalm againſt his enemies, was not ſpoken out of a principle of hatred or revenge; but being perſecuted unjuſtly, and his cauſe being that of God, he might, as a prophet, denounce the divine judgments againſt them. However,

However, it is not lawful for any private perſon to make the like prayers. All we are allowed to do when men treat us with malice and injuſtice, is to keep within the bounds of that meekneſs preſcribed in the Goſpel, to return good for evil, and wait with patience for the divine aſſiſtance.

PSALM LX.

KING *David* deſcribes in this Pſalm, the wars and calamities to which the *Iſraelites* had been expoſed, and the victories and deliverances that God had granted them. In the eighth chapter of the Second Book of *Samuel*, we learn what was the occaſion of this Pſalm.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt thing we obſerve in this Pſalm is, that king *David* lays before God the miſeries which had befallen the *Iſraelites*; which teaches us, that when nations are expoſed to war, and other public calamities, God is the diſpenſer of them, to chaſtiſe and humble them. II. *David* celebrates the power and goodneſs of God, who had aſſiſted his people, and given them the victory over their enemies. Thus is God reconciled with men, after he has afflicted them; and in particular, diſappoints the plots and contrivances of the enemies of his church. Laſtly, This Pſalm teaches us, that the ſtrength and aſſiſtance of man is but vanity, and that there is none but the Lord who can help and deliver us in our diſtreſs, and in whom we may ſafely and perfectly confide.

PSALM LXI.

THIS is a Pſalm of prayer, and full of comfort. In it *David* prays the Lord to take him into his

protection; and expreſſes the greateſt joy and gratitude under the ſenſe of God's favour, and the hope of his aſſiſtance.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Pſalm we ſee *David* groaning and calling upon the Lord for help; but at the ſame time we ſee him full of joy and confidence. Such are the diſpoſitions of all thoſe that fear God: they implore his aſſiſtance when any dangers threaten them, and make him their ſecure refuge. But at the ſame time their confidence in him is unſhaken and conſtant, and they rejoice in full aſſurance of his favour, and a ſenſe of his goodneſs; ſaying with the prophet, whatever their condition be, *O God, thou haſt heard my deſires; thou haſt given me the heritage of thoſe that fear thy name: wherefore I will ſing praiſe unto thy name for ever, and will daily perform my vows.*

PSALM LXII.

I. DAVID teſtifies, that his confidence in God made him perfectly eaſy. II. He ſhews, that we ought not to truſt in men, nor in worldly goods, but in God alone, who is the Lord of all things, and the judge of all men.

REFLECTIONS.

DAVID teaches us, by his example, I. That the true and only way to enjoy uninterrupted peace and tranquillity of mind, is to truſt in God alone; and that when we depend upon him, we fear nothing that men can do to us. II. That it is great blindneſs to truſt in men, who are vanity itſelf; to ſet our heart upon the good things of this world, or become proud and haughty when we abound in them. Laſtly, He declares

declares very expreſsly in this Song, that in the Almighty alone we ought to place our confidence, ſince he is the Lord and Judge of the world, and will render to every one according to his works. Theſe three inſtructions, contained in this Pſalm, are of the greateſt uſe to ſecure our happineſs and tranquillity.

PSALM LXIII.

KING *David* being perſecuted, and flying into the wilderneſs of *Judah*, as we read in the twenty-third chapter of the Firſt Book of *Samuel*, offers up to God the prayer contained in this Pſalm, wherein he declares, that he deſired nothing ſo earneſtly as to be in the houſe of the Lord, and that the ſenſe of God's goodneſs filled him with unſpeakable joy, and a confidence not to be ſhaken by all the attempts of his enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE ardent zeal with which *David*, when a fugitive, and perſecuted, deſired to enjoy the preſence of the Lord in his holy tabernacle, ſhews, that whilſt we are ſtrangers and ſojourners in this world, there is nothing we ought more earneſtly to deſire, than to ſerve God, to praiſe him in his houſe, and to behold his face one day in heaven. II. The comfort, joy, and confidence, which *David* gives ſuch extraordinary proofs of in this Pſalm, moſt evidently ſhew, that the ſenſe of the grace and love of God produces unſpeakable joy and ſatisfaction in the hearts of the faithful, even when they are moſt afflicted; that they fear no evil whilſt they are under his protection; and that nothing can diſturb or rob them of their peace. If therefore we deſire to attain true happineſs, we muſt ſeek it in God alone, that he may be our comfort and joy.

PSALM

PSALM LXIV.

THE Pſalmiſt entreats God to defend him from the ſubtilty and cruelty of his enemies, and foretels their ruin, which he ſays will be manifeſt to all.

Reflections.

WE ſee here, how the wicked often make uſe of artifice and deceit to ſucceed in their deſigns, and to deſtroy the innocent; but that God preſerves thoſe that call upon him and truſt in him, from the ſnares that are laid for them, and turns the devices of their enemies to their own confuſion. This is a doctrine which ought to fill the righteous with joy and confidence, and engages us to adore the goodneſs, wiſdom, and juſtice of the Lord, in his proceedings both with good and bad men.

PSALM LXV.

THIS Pſalm has two parts. In the firſt, *David* ſpeaks of the ſpiritual bleſſings which God granted to thoſe that worſhipped him in *Sion*; and in the ſecond, of the temporal bleſſings which God beſtowed upon the children of *Iſrael*; and particularly, of the fruitfulneſs of the land of *Canaan*.

Reflections.

THE two parts of this Pſalm contain chiefly theſe two inſtructions: I. That as God was formerly worſhipped in *Sion*, and there hearkened to the prayers that were offered up to him, he now dwells in his church, and receives favourably the deſires of all thoſe that call upon him, pardons their ſins, and poureth his benefits upon them. This ſhould convince us how

how happy we are in being members of the church of God, and in the number of thoſe whom he has choſen, and for whom he has prepared thoſe comforts of infinite price, which refreſh the ſoul, and produce that fulneſs of joy which *David* here expreſſes. II. The next inſtruction is, that God governs the world by his power; and particularly, that he provides men with the neceſſaries of this life, by making the land fruitful, and cauſing it to produce bread for our ſuſtenance. Theſe reflections ſhould convince us of our obligation to celebrate and praiſe his name, and to thank him, as the author of all the good things we enjoy, and gratefully employ them to his glory.

PSALM LXVI.

THIS is an exhortation to celebrate the divine power, and the deliverances God had granted his people, in bringing them out of *Egypt*, and upon ſeveral other occaſions. The prophet praiſes God afterwards for the favours he had received from him, and calls upon all good men to join their praiſes with his, and to learn, by his example, to truſt in God, and to fear him more and more.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm engages us, I. To celebrate the power and glory of God, which appear particularly in the wonders he has done in all ages for his church, both under the Old and New Teſtament. II. We learn here, that God, to try the faithful, delivers them up ſometimes to the power of the wicked, and cauſes them to paſs through fire and water; that is, expoſes them to trials and dangers; that he proceeds thus with them to prove them, and to purify them; but that at laſt he delivers them, and grants them

them reſt. III. The example of the prophet teaches us, that when God has delivered us from any danger, we ſhould thank him for it, declare his goodneſs, and ſtir up our neighbours to praiſe him with us; but above all, that we ſhould faithfully diſcharge the vows and promiſes we made to him in our diſtreſs. IV. We ought to take great notice of theſe words of the Pſalmiſt; *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* They teach us, that God does not receive the prayers of the wicked; and that if we deſire he ſhould hear us, our heart ought to be upright and ſincere before him; and that we ſhould ſincerely and inviolably adhere to his worſhip, and the promoting his glory.

PSALM LXVII.

THE people of *Iſrael* pray God to bleſs them, and to grant that all the people in the world may praiſe and adore him.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm engages us to theſe two duties: I. We are to look upon the bleſſing of God as the ſource of all temporal and ſpiritual good things that may contribute to our happineſs, and to pray continually to him in the words of the prophet, ſaying, *God be merciful unto us, and bleſs us, and cauſe his face to ſhine upon us.* II. We muſt offer up this prayer, not only for ourſelves, but for all people, that God would make himſelf known to them, and that his name may be praiſed by all nations. This prayer ſuits us ſtill better than it did the *Jews*, ſince under the Goſpel Diſpenſation the nations of the earth were to be enlightened with the knowledge of God, and enriched with his bleſſing, through *Chriſt Jeſus*.

PSALM

PSALM LXVIII.

DAVID celebrates the power of the Lord, which he had been pleaſed to give proofs of, by deſtroying the enemies of his people, by leading them in the wilderneſs, and by bringing them into the land of *Canaan*, where that people enjoyed perfect proſperity under the divine protection. This Pſalm, which was ſung when the ark of the covenant was removed to *Jeruſalem*, is partly prophetical, and contains ſeveral things that relate to *Jeſus Chriſt* and his kingdom.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn in general from this Pſalm, that God has in all times diſplayed his power in favour of his people, by protecting them againſt their enemies, and by ſhowering down his mercies upon them. This he has done for the Chriſtian church, as well as for the children of *Iſrael:* And what is ſaid in this Pſalm of the protection God vouchſafed to mount *Sion*, againſt the aſſaults of the neighbouring nations, ſhould convince us that the church ſhall always ſubſiſt, in ſpite of all the attempts of the world and the devil. There are two remarkable prophecies in this Pſalm: the firſt is this, *Thou haſt aſcended on high, thou haſt led captivity captive, thou haſt received gifts for men.* In the other, the Holy Ghoſt foretels, that kings, and the moſt diſtant people, ſhould come and worſhip the true God. The firſt of theſe prophecies was accompliſhed, when our Lord aſcended into heaven; as St. *Paul* ſhews in the fourth chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, where he quotes this prophecy, and applies it to the aſcenſion of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and to the gifts he beſtowed on his church by his word and ſpirit. And the ſecond was fulfilled when

ſeveral

ſeveral nations were converted by the preaching of the goſpel; but it will be accompliſhed after a more perfect manner in the latter days: and this ought to be the ſubject of our prayers, our hopes, and our thankſgivings.

PSALM LXIX.

KING *David* being overwhelmed with the violence of his afflictions, does three things in this Pſalm: I. He prays the Lord to have compaſſion on him, and to come to his aſſiſtance; and deſcribes the extremity he was reduced to, by the hatred and malice of his enemies. II. He denounces the judgments of God againſt them. III. He concludes this Pſalm with praiſes and thankſgivings.

REFLECTIONS.

DAVID ſeems here in very great affliction, and in a condition almoſt paſt remedy. This example teaches us, that the children of God may ſometimes be reduced to a very deplorable ſtate; and in particular, be expoſed to the hatred and contempt of the world, becauſe of their zeal for the glory of God. But the prayers and thankſgivings which *David* joins to his complaints, ſhew, that the faithful, in the midſt of their greateſt diſtreſs, ſtill hope in God; that they call upon him for aid and aſſiſtance with fervency, humility and confidence; and that not only after, but even before he delivers them, they praiſe him, and give him thanks for the help they expect to receive from his goodneſs. If *David* expreſſes himſelf as if he ſeemed to deſire the puniſhment of his enemies, we muſt conſider, that they are not properly imprecations againſt them; they are rather predictions than wiſhes; and therefore what he ſays will by no means juſtify us in wiſhing evil to any perſon whatſoever; or to intercede

tercede with God to take vengeance on thoſe who injure us. Laſtly, We are to obſerve, that *David* ſpeaks in this Pſalm as a type of *Jeſus Chriſt:* here we ſee our Lord's zeal for the glory of God; the contempt to which he was expoſed; the gall and vinegar that was offered to him on the croſs; the fatal end of *Judas*; and the obſtinacy and rejection of the *Jews*. This appears from the application which the Apoſtles make in the New Teſtament of ſeveral paſſages of this Pſalm.

PSALM LXX.

DAVID being purſued by his enemies, prays the Lord to come to his aſſiſtance.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm teaches us, that God comes to the help of ſuch as are unjuſtly perſecuted; that the expectation of the righteous in their afflictions, is never vain; and that the deliverances he vouchſafes them, give them and all good men reaſon to rejoice, and celebrate his goodneſs.

PSALM LXXI.

KING *David* compoſed this Pſalm in his old age, and probably at the time of the rebellion of his ſon *Abſalom*. He beſeeches God to deliver him, and to let him again experience the ſame goodneſs which he had felt the effects of from his youth. He complains of the inſults and cruelty of his enemies; and, in full aſſurance that God will protect him, he is filled with a holy joy, and vows to bleſs him for ever.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn from hence, I. That thoſe who truſt in God are never confounded; and that they

they may betake themſelves to him under all their wants, with a perfect aſſurance of his help; but that this confidence cannot be well-grounded, unleſs they have the ſame pious ſentiments as *David* diſcovers in this Pſalm. II. As this prince, for his comfort, and encouragement to praiſe God, called to mind the favours he had received from him in time paſt, ſo ſhould we preſerve the remembrance of the mercies God has vouchſafed us from our youth, and through the whole courſe of our lives. In this meditation, we meet with occaſions of joy and gratitude, and motives of comfort and confidence for the time to come; which is more eſpecially the duty of thoſe perſons who, like *David*, are in an advanced age. III. It is the duty of thoſe who have been expoſed to great afflictions, and whom God has happily delivered, to join with his holy prophet in admiring and celebrating the goodneſs of the Lord towards them, ſaying, *O God, who is like unto thee? Thou which haſt ſhewed me great and ſore troubles, haſt quickened me again, and brought me again from the depths of the earth.* Thus ought we, who enjoy ſo many mercies, and eſpecially ſpiritual graces, to bleſs his holy name in all things, and never ceaſe to publiſh the wonders of his love.

PSALM LXXII.

THIS Pſalm was compoſed when *Solomon* was made king. In it *David* prays God to give his ſon *Solomon* the wiſdom and righteouſneſs which was neceſſary for him, to enable him to govern his people. We have here likewiſe a deſcription of the glory and extent of *Solomon*'s kingdom, and of the happineſs his ſubjects would enjoy under him.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things to be conſidered on this Pſalm: I. The prayers that *David* made for the proſperity of *Solomon*, teach us, that kings and people ought to deſire of God, as a thing of the greateſt conſequence, that he would grant to thoſe that rule over kingdoms, juſtice, wiſdom, clemency, and all other virtues that are neceſſary for them: and that, in order to ſecure the happineſs and good government of a people, it is not ſufficient that they have a powerful prince, and live in plenty, but juſtice ſhould be adminiſtered among them, the wicked ſhould be puniſhed, and the righteous and innocent protected. II. It is to be obſerved, that moſt of the things mentioned in this Pſalm, agree more perfectly to the kingdom of our Lord than to that of *Solomon*; ſince *Jeſus Chriſt* was to be that glorious king, who was to bring the moſt diſtant people into ſubjection, whoſe kingdom was to laſt to the end of the world, and under whoſe government men were to enjoy a complete happineſs, and be filled with the choiceſt bleſſings of heaven. We have therefore in this Pſalm the deſcription of our own happineſs, which ſhould put into our mouths the praiſes with which *David* concludes this ſong: *Bleſſed be the Lord God, the God of Iſrael, who only doth wondrous things. And bleſſed be his glorious name for ever: And let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen and Amen.*

This concludes the Second Book of PSALMS.

PSALM LXXXIII.

A*SAPH* repreſents in this Pſalm, that ſeeing the proſperity of the wicked, and the ſad condition of good men, he had been very much ſtaggered by

the temptation; but that after he had conſidered the ways of the Lord, he diſcovered that the proſperity of the wicked leads them to eternal miſery; from whence he concludes, that all his happineſs conſiſted in cleaving to the Lord only. This Pſalm ought to be carefully conſidered for the inſtructions and pious ſentiments contained in it.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm teaches us how we ought to judge of the proſperity of the wicked, and afflictions of the righteous. We ought never to believe that wicked men, who live in mirth and plenty in this world, and who enjoy all their wiſhes, are truly happy, or that the righteous, becauſe they are afflicted, ſerve God in vain. *Aſaph* has taught us, that to reſiſt this temptation, which is a very dangerous one, we muſt meditate upon the word of God, and the ways of Providence; that then we ſhall find, that the felicity of worldly men is vain and of ſhort duration; and that they are ſet in ſlippery places, from whence they fall ſuddenly. If we add to theſe conſiderations what the Goſpel has revealed concerning the condition of good and bad men after this life, we ſhall never be ſtaggered, either at the proſperous flouriſhing ſtate of the ungodly, or the ſufferings of the righteous, and inſtead of being tempted to forſake the fear of the Lord, we ſhall cleave to him more and more, by a lively faith, and by ſuch ſentiments of love and confidence, as *Aſaph* expreſſes, when he ſays, *I am continually with thee; thou haſt holden me by my right hand; thou ſhalt guide me by thy counſel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee. It is good for me to draw near to God.*

PSALM

PSALM LXXIV.

IN this Pſalm, which was compoſed upon occaſion of the deſtruction of the temple of *Jeruſalem*, the church of the *Jews* does two things: I. It ſpeaks of the deſtruction and burning of the temple, and the melancholy ſtate which it was reduced to in its captivity, being deprived of the tokens of the covenant of God, and of his favour. II. That church implores the aſſiſtance of the Almighty, and is comforted with the conſideration of the deliverances he had formerly granted to his people, and the proofs he gives of his omnipotence in the order of the world, and the general courſe of nature.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm engages us to make theſe four principal reflections: I. That the church has been in all ages expoſed to perſecution; and therefore we ought not to wonder, if the Chriſtian church has been, and ſtill is, ſometimes perſecuted. II. That as God, to puniſh the *Jews* for their abuſe of his ſervice, had ſuffered their temple to be burnt, and them to be led into captivity by idolators; for the ſame reaſons he has often delivered his church into the hands of perſecutors, and deprived nations of the benefit of his word, and removed their candleſtick; but when he thus afflicts his church, his deſign is to chaſtiſe it, to try it and to purify it. III. The third reflection is, that when God appears the moſt provoked with his people, he does not quite forſake them, but always remembers his covenant, and delivers them at laſt by his power and goodneſs. Thus it has always happened, as the *Jews* particularly experienced, when God delivered them from the *Babyloniſh* captivity, and they rebuilt the temple of *Jeruſalem*, the deſtruction

of which is lamented in this Pſalm. Laſtly, As the prophet was grieved for the deſolation of the temple, and the calamities of the *Jews*, and moſt devoutly prayed for their reſtoration, ſo Chriſtians ought to be ſenſibly affected with the misfortunes of the church, and to pray continually for its deliverance and proſperity.

PSALM LXXV.

THE author of this Pſalm, which is probably *David*, praiſes God, that after divers troubles he had eſtabliſhed him in his kingdom; and he vows to govern it righteouſly, and to ſuppreſs the wicked; he ſhews likewiſe, that it is God who diſpoſes all things, who raiſes ſome, and abaſes others, and who, as judge of the world, puniſhes the wicked, and protects good men.

REFLECTIONS.

THE inſtructions we meet with in this Pſalm are; I. That it is God who eſtabliſhes and ſtrengthens kings, and gives peace to their dominions. II. That it is the duty of kings and princes, and in general of all magiſtrates, to exerciſe juſtice, to reſtrain the wicked and the proud, and to protect the innocent. III. That we muſt not be lifted up in proſperity, nor make an ill uſe of power. IV. That the exaltation and abaſement of men proceed from God, who by his Providence governs the world with wiſdom and juſtice. And laſtly, that God reſerves a juſt and ſevere puniſhment for the wicked, but that he always gives proofs of his favour to good men.

PSALM

PSALM LXXVI.

THIS is a ſong of thankſgiving for ſome great victory that God had vouchſafed his people; and an exhortation to acknowledge the power and majeſty of God.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Pſalm we have a magnificent deſcription of the power which God diſplayed in behalf of his people *Iſrael*, when they were aſſaulted by powerful and formidable enemies. From whence we may conclude, that as God is always the ſame, he will do for his church as he has always done; and therefore, that we need not fear either the wrath or power of men. All true believers may have the ſame confidence in the divine love and protection; which ſhould engage us to pay our vows and ſervices to the great God, and to revere his infinite power, as the prophet does here exhort us.

PSALM LXXVII.

I. THE Pſalmiſt here deſcribes the greatneſs of his afflictions, and the conflicts he had endured in himſelf, being even afraid that God had rejected him for ever. II. He repreſents likewiſe, how he was comforted in that condition by meditating upon the mercy of the Lord, upon his promiſes, and upon the wonders he had formerly wrought for the people of *Iſrael*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things to be conſidered in this Pſalm, which are particularly adapted to perſons in affliction. I. The ſighs and complaints of the pro-

phet ſhew, that perſons who are otherwiſe acceptable to God are ſometimes in extreme anguiſh, and have great conflicts in themſelves, and are deprived of the actual ſenſe of God's grace to ſuch a degree, that God ſeems to have forſaken them, and withdrawn his love from them. II. Thoſe who paſs through ſuch trials may learn from hence, that the way not to ſink under their grief, is to meditate on God's infinite mercy, the firmneſs of his covenant, and the marks he has given, at divers times, of his love and protection to his people, and to all his faithful ſervants. But Chriſtians have ſtill greater motives of comfort, when they reflect upon God's love manifeſted in *Chriſt Jeſus*, and all that our great Redeemer has ſuffered in body and ſoul for our redemption, and to bring about our reconciliation with God.

PSALM LXXVIII.

THIS hiſtorical Pſalm is an abridgment of the hiſtory of the children of *Iſrael*, and of the favours which God had granted to that people; of their various ſins, and of the puniſhments inflicted upon them by God; and in particular, of what befel them when they were conquered, and the ark of the covenant was taken by the *Philiſtines*, in the time of *Eli* the high prieſt. This hiſtory begins at the departure out of *Egypt*, and reaches to the reign of king *David*; at which time, the ark which had been before at *Shiloh*, and then at *Kirjathjearim*, was brought to *Jeruſalem*, where the ſervice of God was afterwards eſtabliſhed.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are four things eſpecially to be remarked in the hiſtory of the *Iſraelites*, which

which we here have an abridgment of. I. God's kindneſs to that nation, and the miracles he had wrought for them in *Egypt*, in the wilderneſs, and in the land of *Canaan*. II. The ingratitude of the *Iſraelites*, their frequent murmurings againſt God, and their inſenſibility under his chaſtiſements and long ſuffering. III. The puniſhment which God inflicted on them for their rebellion and infidelity, giving them up into the hands of their enemies; and in particular of the *Philiſtines*, who conquered them and took the ark of the covenant. IV. The deliverance which God vouchſafed the *Iſraelites*; puniſhing the *Philiſtines*, bringing the ark back into the land of *Iſrael*, and ſome time after ſettling *David* on the throne. This Pſalm, which was written for the inſtruction of the *Iſraelites*, ſhould likewiſe ſerve for ours, and may teach us, 1. That we ought carefully to preſerve the remembrance of God's mercies; and that it is the duty of parents to teach them to their children and their poſterity. 2. That the mercies of God engage us to love and fear him; and that if the *Jews* became guilty before God, by their ſins and frequent rebellions, our ingratitude would be ſtill more heinous, if, after all that God has done for us, we ſhould prove faithleſs. 3. The judgments which fell upon the *Jews*, inform us, that God cannot leave thoſe ſins unpuniſhed, which are committed by perſons who have received great favours from him; and that if we imitate the *Jews* in their rebellion, we have reaſon to expect the moſt dreadful effects of God's wrath and vengeance. Laſtly, The judgments of God upon the enemies of his people, and the favours he beſtowed on them, after he had afflicted them, ſhould convince us, that God cannot neglect to promote his own glory, and will for ever be the ſupport and defender of his church.

PSALM LXXIX.

THE *Jews* complain in this Pſalm, that the idolators had deſtroyed the city and temple of *Jeruſalem*; and beſeech God to be reconciled with his people, and to puniſh the blaſphemies and cruelties of their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are here to conſider, I. The deplorable ſtate the *Jews* were reduced to, when God delivered their city and temple to the fury of the *Babylonians*. This afflicted people acknowledge, that their ſins had provoked the wrath of God. To the ſame cauſe we may aſcribe the evils and calamities, with which God viſits men, and particularly his church; and we have here a memorable inſtance to prove that God does not ſpare thoſe who are received into covenant with him, when they break it; and that he puniſhes them ſometimes with great ſeverity. II. This Pſalm teaches us likewiſe, that when the church is perſecuted, we ſhould implore the mercy of God in its behalf, and endeavour to turn away his wrath by our repentance. III. As the *Jews* hoped God would take vengeance for his ſervants blood, and would deliver them for the glory of his name, leſt the idolators ſhould inſult and blaſpheme, we ought firmly to believe, that God is engaged by his own glory to ſet bounds to the malice of perſecutors, and in general to reſtrain the malice of the ungodly, and thoſe who provoke him.

PSALM LXXX.

THE *Iſraelites* repreſent the extreme deſolation they were reduced to; they intreat the Lord to come to their deliverance, and to remember the covenant he had made with his people; and they promiſe to turn unto him, and to bleſs his holy name.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are theſe three things to be obſerved in this Pſalm, I. The firſt is, that if the *Iſraelites*, who were the people of God, the ſheep of his paſture, and the vineyard which he himſelf had planted, and cultivated with particular care, was expoſed to ſo terrible a deſolation as is here deſcribed, the ſufferings of the Chriſtian church ſhould not ſurprize us, eſpecially ſince *Jeſus Chriſt* has foretold it ſhould be perſecuted. II. The next reflection is, that in a time of calamity and ſuffering we muſt apply to God to be reſtored to his favour; and that the true way to put a ſtop to his wrath is, to be converted, and never more to depart from him. Laſtly, What is ſaid in this Pſalm, may be applied to the havock which wickedneſs and impiety uſually make in the church, when it enjoys peace and temporal proſperity; and believers have not leſs reaſon to beſeech God to ſanctify and defend it againſt its ſpiritual enemies, than to pray that he would ſecure it againſt perſecutors, who ſeek to deſtroy it.

PSALM LXXXI.

THIS Pſalm was deſigned as a Pſalm of praiſe to God in the feaſts which the *Jews* kept, the firſt day of every month. God ſpeaks to his people, and reproaches them, that notwithſtanding he had bleſſed them, and given them his law, they were fallen into rebellion. The Lord teſtifies his earneſt deſire that this people ſhould obey him; to the end that he might ſhower down his bleſſings upon them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS Pſalm ſhould excite us to praiſe God, and to pay him our homage in a moſt zealous and ſolemn manner. This duty does not leſs concern Chriſtians than the *Jews*; and if God beſtowed conſider-

conſiderable favours on the *Jews*, by bringing them out of *Egypt*, and giving them his law, he has done incomparably greater things for us, in redeeming us by *Jeſus Chriſt* his ſon, and giving us the knowledge of his Goſpel. II. God here declares, in the moſt clear and expreſs manner, that he is always diſpoſed to load men with his favours; that he offers them his grace; that he deſires nothing but their welfare and ſalvation; and that if men are miſerable, it is only becauſe they will not hear his voice, but wilfully harden their hearts. What God ſays in this Pſalm, teaches us likewiſe, that when men refuſe to hearken to him, and chooſe to follow their own inclinations rather than obey him, he gives them up to their own hardneſs, and deprives them of the effects of his love.

PSALM LXXXII.

THIS is a grave remonſtrance, addreſſed to magiſtrates and judges. The prophet repreſents to them, that God was in the midſt of them, and exhorts them to exerciſe juſtice with uprightneſs, and tells them, that though they were in authority, they were but mortal men; and that God, who was the judge of the world, would judge them, and render to them according to their works.

REFLECTIONS.

JUDGES, magiſtrates, and all that are in authority, ought to improve by the ſubject of this Pſalm; and remember, that God having eſtabliſhed them for the adminiſtration of juſtice, is preſent at their judgments; that it is therefore their duty to do right to every one, without reſpect of perſons; and above all, to protect the weak and innocent when oppreſſed. For which reaſon, they ought to remember, that although they are ſet above others, yet they muſt die one day like all the reſt of mankind,

and

and that then they ſhall appear before the ſupreme judge, to give an account of their actions.

PSALM LXXXIII.

SEveral of the neighbouring nations being gathered together to make war againſt the *Iſraelites*, the prophet entreats the Lord to deſtroy thoſe nations, as he had formerly deſtroyed the kings that aſſaulted the children of *Iſrael*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE contents of this Pſalm engage us to conſider, I. That as God formerly permitted the people bordering upon the *Iſraelites* to unite themſelves againſt them, he ſuffers alſo, for wiſe and juſt reaſons, that his church at ſome times ſhould be expoſed to the aſſaults of a great number of powerful and formidable enemies; and that the juſt ſhould be expoſed to the contradiction and malice of the world. II. That God, by his infinite power, has always defeated the contrivances of thoſe who ſeek the ruin of his church; and that all the united ſtrength of men can prevail nothing againſt it, nor againſt thoſe whom he loves, and favours with his protection.

PSALM LXXXIV.

THE prophet being removed from the tabernacle, fervently deſires to come near it; he celebrates with devout tranſports the happineſs of thoſe that could go into it at all times, and declares he would prefer that happineſs before all the advantages of the world. It is probable king *David* offered up this prayer to God when his ſon *Abſalom*'s rebellion obliged him to depart from *Jeruſalem*.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is chiefly to be conſidered here is, the tender and ſincere regard which the faithful bear to the ſervice of God. The fervent regard that *David* here expreſſes for the tabernacle, and for the altar of God, teaches us, that there is nothing we ought to wiſh with ſo much earneſtneſs, as to ſerve God, and to praiſe him; that this is the greateſt happineſs and comfort we can enjoy in this life; that it is an advantage preferable to all the riches and glories of the world, ſince *the Lord will give grace and glory; and will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly.* Laſtly, We are to make this reflection on this Pſalm; that if the children of God thus deſire to praiſe him, and to ſerve him in this world, they aſpire, with ſtill greater ardour, to ſee his face in heaven, and to praiſe him for ever in the aſſembly.

PSALM LXXXV.

THE *Iſraelites* having been delivered from ſome great calamity, return thanks to God for being reconciled to them, pray him to compleat their reſtoration, promiſe inviolable fidelity, and hope that he will ſhower down his bleſſings upon them.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Pſalm we have two principal inſtructions, I. That God makes men, and ſometimes his own people and his church, feel the effects of his wrath for the puniſhment of their ſins; and that the end which he propoſes by it is, to recover men from their errors. II. That when he ſees men humbled, he is reconciled with them, and is always ready to deliver them

them that fear him, and to beſtow on them his choiceſt bleſſings, both temporal and ſpiritual.

PSALM LXXXVI.

DAVID, in great affliction, with fervent zeal and firm confidence, calls upon the Lord; begs of him, above all things, grace to know and fear him, and to walk in his ways; and beſeeches him to deliver him from his enemies, according to his mercy and promiſes.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS prayer, and the example of king *David*, ſhould excite and encourage thoſe who are in affliction and diſtreſs to call upon God for help, with profound humility, and firm confidence in his mercy and power; beſeeching him, not only to deliver them from the evils which preſs ſore upon them, but, above all, to give them grace to pleaſe and obey him, as *David* did in this prayer: *Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: Unite my heart to fear thy name.* We ought likewiſe, in our troubles, to meditate upon God's infinite goodneſs, and conſider, *that he is full of compaſſion, and gracious, long-ſuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth*, and always ready to give tokens of his favour to thoſe that ſerve him. This will ſupport us under all our trials, fill us with joy and conſolation, and afford us, even in the midſt of trouble, reaſon to praiſe and bleſs him.

PSALM LXXXVII.

THE prophet deſcribes the glory of *Jeruſalem*, and of *Sion*, and foretels, that all the nations ſhould admire the happineſs of that city, and of the people of God, and deſire to be partakers of it.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm, which deſcribes the glory of the *Iſraelites*, is ſtill better ſuited to the Chriſtian church. The holy Ghoſt foretels therein, that the pagans, and the moſt diſtant nations, ſhould be one day admitted into the divine covenant, and numbered among the worſhippers of the true God. This is our happineſs, through the coming of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*; and for this we ought to return continual thanks to God.

PSALM LXXXVIII.

THE prophet, who compoſed this Pſalm, ſeems to be in the deepeſt affliction, and almoſt deprived of all conſolation. He repreſents therein the violence and the continuance of his ſufferings, and the terrors which diſcompoſed his mind; and complains, that God did not hear him, tho' he called upon him with great fervency.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reading and meditating on this Pſalm is very proper for the comfort and inſtruction of thoſe that are overwhelmed with deep ſorrow. The condition of the prophet, who ſpeaks here, may convince them, that the ſaints have undergone the like trials; that they have been, as it were, forſaken and deprived of all comfort, ſo that for a conſiderable time, God ſeemed to purſue them in his wrath, and ſcourge them ſeverely. Wherefore, thoſe that fear God ſhould not loſe courage when they are expoſed to outward afflictions, and even inwardly troubled for want of comfort, and by the terrors they feel in their ſoul. But they ought to repreſent to God their ſad condition, wait with patience for his conſolation,

and

and remember likewiſe, that anguiſh of ſpirit does not hinder God from beholding them in his mercy. This we are more certainly aſſured of, by the terrors which our Lord felt in his ſoul at the time of his paſſion, than by the example of the prophet, who ſpeaks in this Pſalm.

PSALM LXXXIX.

THIS Pſalm was compoſed at a time when the people of God were in affliction and calamity. The prophet here deſcribes the majeſty, power, and goodneſs of the Lord; which appeared in delivering the children of *Iſrael*, when he brought them out of *Egypt*; and in the covenant he made with *David*, promiſing to eſtabliſh his throne to himſelf and his poſterity. He next repreſents, that, notwithſtanding theſe promiſes, the kingdom of *Judah* was at that time in great deſolation, being deſpoiled of its glory, and delivered into the hands of its enemies; and implores the compaſſion of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE reading of this Pſalm ſhould animate us with an holy zeal to declare the loving-kindneſs of the Lord, his power and faithfulneſs, which appear in the creation and government of the world, and in the wonders he has done, not only for the children of *Iſrael*, but alſo in behalf of the Chriſtian church. II. We are to obſerve in this Pſalm, that nations are perfectly happy when God favours them with his wholſome preſence, and is himſelf their buckler, their ſtrength, and their glory. III. What is here ſaid of the promiſes made to *David* and his poſterity, and the deplorable condition which the deſcendants of that prince were reduced to, ſhews, that God protects kings and nations whilſt they continue

tinue faithful to him; but when they break his covenant, he withdraws his protection from them; that, nevertheleſs he does not forſake them entirely, and chaſtiſes them only for their converſion, and to bring them to himſelf. IV. We muſt remember, that the covenant, which God had made with *David*, and the promiſes, with which he had engaged to eſtabliſh his throne and his poſterity for ever, related to the Meſſiah; and that it was verified in the kingdom of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, which will ſubſiſt to all eternity. Laſtly, Under all our afflictions, whether general or particular, we ought, with the prophet, humbly to entreat the Lord to aſſiſt us, to remember his covenant, and to conſider our unworthineſs, ſince we are only weak and mortal creatures before him, and have nothing to expect but from his power and goodneſs.

Here ends the Third Book of PSALMS.

PSALM XC.

FOR the right underſtanding of this Pſalm, it is neceſſary to obſerve, that when the children of *Iſrael* were in the wilderneſs, God, provoked with their murmuring and infidelity, declared, that all thoſe who came out of *Egypt* above the age of twenty years, ſhould die in the wilderneſs within the ſpace of forty years, and ſhould not enter into the land of *Canaan*, as appears from the fourteenth chapter of *Numbers*. It was upon that occaſion, and at the time when abundance of the people died, that *Moſes* made this prayer to God. In it he deſcribes the vanity and miſeries of human life; acknowledges that the ſins of the *Iſraelites* had kindled the wrath of God againſt them, and made their days be ſo much ſhortened, and was the reaſon why thoſe who came out of *Egypt* in their full ſtrength, waxed not old.

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He beſeeches God to give his people grace to make a good uſe of his corrections, and ſeriouſly conſider the vanities of this life. Laſtly, He begs God to return with his favour, and prays him to be reconciled with his people.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm preſents us with ſeveral very wholſome inſtructions. I. We here learn, that God, who is the Creator of the world, and has given men life, makes them, when he pleaſes, return to duſt; that life is ſhort, and is ſoon paſſed away, and is moreover attended with many troubles and afflictions. II. We are to conſider, that as the rebellion of the *Iſraelites* expoſed them to the wrath of God, and to death in the wilderneſs, ſo the miſeries of this life, and death itſelf, are the conſequences of ſin; but, to the children of God, death is an effect of his love, and a means which he makes uſe of to procure their happineſs. III. *Moſes* teaches us, that the uſe we ought to make of our knowledge of the ſhortneſs of this life, is to learn from thence to become wiſe, and fear God, and by prayer to apply to him, that whilſt we remain in this world, he would be pleaſed always to grant us his grace, and make us at all times feel the effects of his bounty, that we may paſs this life in peace and happineſs. Laſtly, The conſideration of the vanities of the preſent life, ſhould raiſe our thoughts to the expectation of a better, and make us aſpire after that immortality which is prepared for us in the heavens, and has been purchaſed for us by *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord.

PSALM XCI.

THIS Pſalm is an excellent deſcription of the protection with which God favours thoſe who

fear him, and truſt in him, and of the bleſſings which he beſtows upon them.

Reflections.

WE may ſee in this Pſalm how happy thoſe are that truſt in God, and draw near to him. The prophet aſſures us, that God covers them with his protection; that being near God, they are in ſafety, and in time of trouble fear no evil. God commands his angels to keep them from all dangers; he loves them tenderly; he preſerves them from every thing that might hurt them, delivers them when they call upon him in their diſtreſs, and heaps upon them all kinds of bleſſings. Theſe glorious privileges and excellent promiſes are very proper to comfort and encourage all ſuch as fear God, and to fill them with unſpeakable joy, and unſhaken confidence. They likewiſe teach us, that if we deſire to enjoy real and ſolid happineſs, we muſt wean ourſelves from the world, ſeek all our happineſs in God alone, and ſtudy only, and above all things, to pleaſe him.

PSALM XCII.

THIS Pſalm was to be recited upon the ſabbath-day. The prophet herein celebrates, with great zeal and holy joy, the marvellous works of God; above all, he admires the wiſe conduct of Providence towards the wicked, and towards good men. He ſhews, that if the wicked proſper for awhile, they are rooted out at the laſt; whereas God crowns the righteous with all manner of bleſſings.

Reflections.

SINCE we learn, from the firſt words of this Pſalm, that *it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to declare his goodneſs and faithfulneſs day and night*;

night; we ought all of us to be animated with an holy zeal, to the diligent, chearful, and earneſt diſcharge of a duty ſo juſt and ſo agreeable. This we ſhall have a powerful motive to, if we apply ourſelves to the conſideration of the works of God, which are great and marvellous; and, above all, if we attend to the ways of Providence, and the conduct of the Almighty towards good and bad men. It ſometimes happens that wicked and worldly men flouriſh, and are happy, but their poſterity paſſeth away like the graſs; God deſtroys them, and roots them out utterly. On the contrary, he bleſſes the righteous, ſecures their happineſs, and makes them proſper and flouriſh and bear fruit, even unto their old age, and to be in this world examples of his mercy and faithfulneſs. This doctrine, which is of the greateſt importance, affords us extraordinary motives to praiſe the wiſe providence of God, and to celebrate his juſtice, and addict ourſelves continually to purity and innocence; that we may partake of thoſe excellent bleſſings, with which God promiſes to reward the piety of thoſe who fear him, and truſt in him.

PSALM XCIII.

IN this Pſalm the prophet celebrates the greatneſs of God, and the ſovereign power by which he rules over all things, and particularly over his people.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm teaches us, that God rules with glory and magnificence over all the world; that his throne is eſtabliſhed in righteouſneſs; that his power infinitely exceeds that of all created beings; from whence we are to conclude, that he will reign for ever, for the good and advantage of his people, and of all thoſe who ſerve him, and ſubmit themſelves to him.

PSALM XCIV.

I. IN this prayer, the children of *Iſrael* repreſent to God the ſad condition they were reduced to by the cruelty of their enemies, whoſe inſolence, impiety, and blaſphemies they deſcribe. II. The prophet nevertheleſs adores the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in the corrections wherewith he viſits men; and foretels the deliverance of the righteous, and the deſtruction of the wicked.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT here commands our attention is, I. The deſcription he gives us of the wicked and ungodly. He repreſents them as cruel and unjuſt; and at the ſame time, as impious wretches, who inſult the Deity with their blaſphemies, ſaying, at the very time they are committing their crimes, that God does not ſee them, nor will puniſh them. This is the higheſt pitch of wickedneſs, to add impiety to ſin, and not to fear God when we offend him. II. We learn from this Pſalm, that good men abhor theſe impious ſentiments, and are firmly perſuaded that God, who has formed and created men, knows all their actions, all their words, and all their thoughts, and that he will be their judge. III. Another inſtruction we here receive, regards the uſefulneſs of God's corrections, which is expreſſed in theſe words: *Bleſſed is the man whom thou chaſteneſt, O Lord, and teacheſt him out of thy law.* The laſt reflection is, that God will never forſake his people, and his inheritance; that he is the defender of the faithful; that he is the joy of their ſouls in the midſt of their troubles; and that he ſupports them againſt thoſe who perſecute them, and ſeek to deſtroy them.

PSALM

PSALM XCV.

THIS Pſalm has two parts. In the firſt, the Pſalmiſt invites the *Iſraelites* to praiſe God, and to adore his majeſty. In the ſecond, he exhorts them to obey the voice of God, and not to imitate the hardneſs of their fathers, whoſe rebellions in the wilderneſs were the cauſe of their being excluded from the land of *Canaan*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm engages us to two duties. The firſt is, to render to God, with an holy joy and fervency, the adorations and praiſes which belong to him, on account of his power and majeſty; but above all, becauſe he is our God, and we have the happineſs to be his people. The ſecond duty is, To improve the exhortations which *David* addreſſes to the *Iſraelites*, not to harden their hearts as their fathers had done. Theſe words, *To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts:* and thoſe, *I have ſworn in my wrath that they ſhall not enter into my reſt*; do concern Chriſtians as well as the *Jews*; as the author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, in the third and fourth chapters, obſerves, where he bids us take heed, leſt, by hardneſs of heart, and rebellion againſt the goſpel, we ſhould be deprived of eternal reſt, as the rebellious *Iſraelites* were excluded from the land of *Canaan* for their incredulity.

PSALM XCVI.

THIS Pſalm invites the *Iſraelites*, and all people, to bleſs the Lord, to call upon him, and worſhip him, as the only true God; to celebrate his power, and ſubmit with joy to his government.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHEN the prophet, in this Pſalm, exhorted all the nations of the earth to ſing praiſes unto God, and to come and worſhip in his temple; they were not in a condition to diſcharge this duty, becauſe they were engaged in ignorance and idolatry. Therefore theſe exhortations are peculiarly applicable to the times of the Goſpel, and deſcribe the zeal which ſhould inſpire us, and the joy which good men ſhould expreſs, when they reflect, that the ſeveral nations of the world are enlightened with the knowledge of the true God, and of his ſon *Jeſus Chriſt*. Theſe great privileges, which we are partakers of, engage us to praiſe the Lord without ceaſing, and publiſh abroad the deliverance he has vouchſafed us, and the marvellous things he has done for our ſakes; to worſhip him with fear, humility, and joy; and, above all, to preſent him the oblation he requires of us, which is, to offer him our heart, and ſhew, by our obedience, that the Lord does truly reign over us; and that we make all our happineſs, and all our glory, conſiſt in belonging to him.

PSALM XCVII.

THE ſubject of this Pſalm is the ſame as of the foregoing. It is an exhortation to celebrate the majeſty and omnipotence of God, and the glory of his kingdom, and to rejoice in the advantages which the eſtabliſhment of this kingdom procures to thoſe who ſubmit to it.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm is not ſo much a deſcription of God's dominion over the *Jews*, as a prophecy of the eſtabliſhment of the kingdom of *Jeſus Chriſt* over

over all nations, and the deſtruction of idolatry and impiety. The Holy Spirit here deſcribes the effects which the coming of that kingdom would produce, and the joy which the faithful would feel when it ſhould be manifeſted; wherefore it principally concerns us to improve thoſe affections of zeal and devotion which are manifeſt in this divine ſong. We here learn, that the beſt way of praiſing God, and the true character of his worſhippers, is to love him, to hate evil, and to rejoice in him continually. Laſtly, We here ſee, that God crowns with glory and happineſs thoſe that fear him; which is contained in theſe excellent promiſes; *The Lord preſerveth the ſouls of his ſaints, and delivers them out of the hand of the wicked: Light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart: Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holineſs.*

PSALM XCVIII.

THIS is an exhortation to praiſe God for the redemption he was to ſend his people, and to rejoice in the coming of his kingdom.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm regards Chriſtians, rather than the *Jews*; as it is only ſince the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*, that we can properly ſay, that God has fulfilled his promiſes, and *hath remembered his mercy and his truth*; and that *all the ends of the earth have ſeen the ſalvation of our God.* It is now, therefore, that men ſhould *ſing unto the Lord a new ſong:* Now ought his glory to be celebrated by all nations, and in all places of the world, with holy tranſports of joy. Now, ſince we live in theſe happy times, when God reigns over us, and know that he is to judge the world in

righteouſneſs, we ought to ſubmit to him with humility and obedience, and anſwer the valuable favour he has beſtowed on us, in *delivering us from the power of darkneſs, and tranſlating us into the kingdom of his dear Son.*

PSALM XCIX.

THIS Pſalm was deſigned to celebrate the majeſty of God, and the glory of his kingdom. It likewiſe mentions the mercies God had ſhewn the *Iſraelites*, in the time of *Moſes*, *Aaron*, and *Samuel*, and upon divers other occaſions.

REFLECTIONS.

I. HERE we learn, that it is the duty of thoſe who have the happineſs to know God, and to be the ſubjects of his kingdom, to fear him, to reverence his majeſty, to worſhip him with the profoundeſt humility, and without ceaſing to celebrate his name, which is great, terrible, and holy. II. We ſee in this Pſalm, that God did formerly deliver the *Iſraelites*, when *Moſes*, *Aaron*, and *Samuel*, called upon him; and that he alſo took vengeance on them for their ſins, when they offended him. This ſhews, that as God is always good, he is alſo juſt, and has ſometimes made men feel the marks of his mercy, and ſometimes of his wrath, to engage them to love and fear him.

PSALM C.

ALL people are here exhorted to worſhip God, to praiſe him as their Creator, and to celebrate his goodneſs and truth.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three reflections to be made on this Pſalm: I. That we ought to pray, that all nations of the world may worſhip the Lord, and glorify his name; and that to this end God would make himſelf known unto them, and give them the knowledge of his ſon *Jeſus Chriſt*. II. That if we deſire to ſerve God in an acceptable manner, we muſt not do it by conſtraint, or with our lips only, but heartily, and with a holy joy. III. That in order to excite us to this duty, we muſt conſider, that God is our Creator; that *we are his people, and the ſheep of his paſture*; and that he heaps his favours upon us, not only of nature, but eſpecially of grace, and gives his church tokens of his goodneſs and mercy.

PSALM CI.

DAVID makes a vow to govern his people righteouſly, and chiefly to puniſh and drive the wicked from him, and to ſhew favour to good men.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Pſalm we ſee what are the duties and ſentiments of good princes and good magiſtrates, and how they ought to conduct themſelves in the government of their ſtates. I. They ought to walk in uprightneſs, to abhor evil, and to apply themſelves to govern their people with juſtice. II. It is their duty to puniſh the wicked and the ungodly; to drive from them proud men, ſlanderers, deceivers and flatterers; and, on the contrary, to make much of upright and ſincere men, protecting them, and employing them in their ſervice. Perſons in authority ought to meditate upon this Pſalm for their inſtruction; and we ought

ought all of us to pray to God that he would inſpire thoſe that govern the people with theſe ſentiments; ſince upon that depends the happineſs and tranquility of the public, and the promoting of the glory of God.

PSALM CII.

THIS is a prayer of the captive *Jews*, in which they repreſent to God the deſolation of *Jeruſalem*, and their deplorable ſtate, and beſeech him to reſtore them. They likewiſe here expreſs their truſt in God, and their hope that he, who is always the ſame, and unchangeable in his promiſes as well as in his eſſence, would reinſtate them in ſuch a manner, that all nations ſhould admire the happineſs and glory of *Sion*; and that the poſterity of the *Jews* might bleſs the Lord for ever.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things chiefly to be conſidered in this Pſalm: Firſt, The ſad condition of the captive *Jews*, and their extreme affliction; and ſecondly, their hope in God. Therefore the reading of this Pſalm furniſhes us with theſe two inſtructions: I. That the children of God have a tender affection for the church, and that there is nothing which more deeply concerns them than to ſee it expoſed to ſufferings. But if the faithful are afflicted when the church is perſecuted, they are not leſs afflicted to ſee the deplorable ſtate it is often reduced to when it enjoys peace and proſperity. II. As the ancient *Jews* firmly truſted that God would ariſe and take pity upon *Sion*, and reſtore it to its glorious ſtate; and that he would, by delivering the *Jews* from their captivity, manifeſt his glory to all the kings and nations of the earth; we ought not to doubt but God will do the ſame thing,

and

and even after a more illuſtrious manner, in favour of the Chriſtian church; and that the time is coming, wherein his glory and his kingdom will appear in ſplendor. This happy reſtoration is what true Chriſtians deſire above all things, and what they aſk of God in moſt fervent prayers. This too will undoubtedly be brought to paſs by the infinite power of *Jeſus Chriſt*, ſince he is Lord of the world, and is over all God bleſſed for ever. This St. *Paul* teaches in the firſt chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, where he applies to the Son of God what is ſaid of the creation of the world, at the end of this Pſalm.

PSALM CIII.

THIS is a Pſalm of praiſe, in which, I. *David* bleſſes the Lord for all the favours he had granted him, and for what he had done for the people of *Iſrael*. II. He celebrates here particularly the great goodneſs of God towards men; the mercy he ſhews in pardoning their ſins, and his tender and conſtant love to thoſe that fear him. Laſtly, He here invites all creatures to join with him in praiſing the name of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS is one of the moſt excellent ſongs of thankſgiving in the whole Book of Pſalms. *David* here ſeems affected with the higheſt ſtrains of devotion, and the moſt lively ſenſe of gratitude. He here teaches us by his example to bleſs God, not only with our mouth but with our whole heart, and with all the powers of our ſoul; to cheriſh the remembrance of all his mercies, and to take delight in rehearſing them, and praiſing him continually. The prophet here celebrates particularly the infinite mercy

cy of God, who, knowing that we are but duſt, bears with us, and does not render to us what our ſins deſerve; and entertains the ſame compaſſion and kindneſs as a father does for his children. But he teaches us, at the ſame time, that the divine goodneſs is diſplayed only in behalf of thoſe that fear him and reverence him; and that his mercy extends only to them that *keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them.* Laſtly, It appears from this Pſalm, that, in order to praiſe God worthily, we muſt not only praiſe him ourſelves, but muſt earneſtly deſire, with *David*, that he may be praiſed by men and angels, and by all creatures. With ſuch ſentiments as theſe of zeal, love and gratitude, we ſhould ſay continually, *Bleſs the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion: Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul.*

PSALM CIV.

I. *DAVID* adores and celebrates the majeſty of God, which appears in the works of creation and providence. II. He deſcribes the power, wiſdom and goodneſs, by which God preſerves and governs the many creatures which the world contains. Laſtly, He wiſhes that God may be praiſed and bleſſed for ever.

REFLECTIONS.

THE deſign of this Pſalm is, to teach us to praiſe God for his marvellous works; and to this end to conſider, with great attention, the wonders which the world preſents to our view; the many different creatures it contains, and which we ſee in the heavens, in the air, upon the earth, and in the waters; the regular and wonderful order that reigns among them; the manner in which God preſerves and governs them; and the care which his adorable providence takes of plants

plants and animals, and particularly, in providing for the neceſſities of man; ſince all creatures ſerve to the various uſes and conveniences of our life. Theſe reflections lead us to acknowledge, that God is the author of all theſe things; that by him alone they ſubſiſt; that as he has created them by his power, he can alſo deſtroy them by his will alone. Above all we ſhould remember, that if all theſe creatures were made for man, man was made for God, and that God has placed us in this world, and has made us capable of ſeeing ſo many wonders, and of enjoying ſo many different bleſſings, that we may know our Creator, and love him, and thank him for all his kindneſſes. Theſe ſentiments of admiration, love and gratitude, which this meditation produces in us, are in this Pſalm expreſſed by theſe words: *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wiſdom haſt thou made them all: The earth is full of thy riches. The glory of the Lord ſhall endure for ever: The Lord ſhall rejoice in his works. Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul. Praiſe the Lord.*

PSALM CV.

I. THE prophet exhorts the *Iſraelites* to praiſe God, and to celebrate his power, goodneſs and faithfulneſs. II. He relates what God had done for their fathers, in conſequence of the covenant he had made with *Abraham*. III. He recites what had happened to the poſterity of that patriarch, and particularly to *Joſeph*; the arrival of *Jacob* in *Egypt*; the perſecution which the people of *Iſrael* underwent in that country; the plagues with which God ſmote the *Egyptians*; their ſojourning in the wilderneſs; and laſtly, their ſettlement in the land of *Canaan*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN this Pſalm we ſee the prophet break forth into joy, and expreſs that holy zeal which animates the faithful to praiſe God, and make his mercies known to all. II. We have here a brief hiſtory of God's favours to the *Iſraelites*, which proves, that God has always taken care of his own people; that in all times he has wrought great wonders in their favour; and that he is faithful and conſtant in his covenant, and in his promiſes, which ought to fill us with confidence, and convince us that God will be for ever the protector of his church, and his children. III. This hymn was deſigned to perpetuate among the *Iſraelites* the remembrance of God's mercies, and to excite their gratitude. Though theſe events do not directly regard Chriſtians, yet they ought to preſerve the remembrance of them, as affording matter for the moſt edifying and inſtructive meditations. But it is our duty, above all, to take occaſion, from what is contained in this Pſalm, to raiſe our thoughts to the conſideration of thoſe ſignal mercies and ſpiritual bleſſings which God has communicated to us, by making with us a new covenant in *Jeſus Chriſt*; by delivering us from the captivity of ſin, of the devil, and of death, and by receiving us into his church. IV. We ſee in the laſt words of this Pſalm, that God ſhewed all theſe mercies to the *Jews that they might obſerve his ſtatutes and keep his laws*. This is God's deſign in doing good to men. His mercies naturally tend to engage us to love and fear him, and keep his commandments, which is the beſt way of expreſſing our gratitude.

PSALM

PSALM CVI.

AS the former Pſalm gives an account of the mercies of God to the children of *Iſrael*; this is a relation and confeſſion of the murmurings, and of the ſins they fell into after their departure out of *Egypt*, both in the wilderneſs and in the land of *Canaan*. We ſee likewiſe here the ſeveral chaſtiſements with which God viſited this people, and the marks he gave them of his goodneſs in ſupporting and delivering them on many occaſions.

REFLECTIONS.

TO improve this Pſalm to our edification, we muſt obſerve chiefly theſe three things. I. The confeſſion which the *Jews* made of their ſins and rebellion, their murmurings and ingratitude, and the idolatry they had ſeveral times been guilty of. From hence we may learn, on one hand, not to imitate the ingratitude and infidelity of that people, ſince God has conferred infinitely greater mercies on us than on them; and on the other, to acknowledge and confeſs our ſins before God, when we have offended him. II. We here ſee, that whenever the *Iſraelites* fell into diſobedience, they felt the effects of God's wrath. God does not ſuffer the diſobedience of men to go unpuniſhed, but puniſhes the ſins of thoſe whom he has received into his covenant, and who abuſe his favours, which he does, in order to recover them to their duty. Therefore when God viſits us, either with general calamities, or particular afflictions, inſtead of murmuring, we ought to acknowledge the juſtice of his chaſtiſements, make a righteous uſe of them, and be afraid to draw new ones upon ourſelves by the hardneſs of our hearts. III. It is ſaid in this Pſalm, that God in his great goodneſs had borne with the *Jews*, taken

taken pity on them, and even delivered them upon ſeveral occaſions. Theſe are proofs of God's great mercy; that he is full of compaſſion and long-ſuffering to men, even to thoſe who have offended him, and is always ready to pardon men, as ſoon as they grow better by his correction, and to make them happy.

PSALM CVII.

THE deſign of this Pſalm is to ſhew that the Providence of God expoſes men to various trials and dangers, to engage them to have recourſe to him, to fear him, and to celebrate his goodneſs. This the prophet proves by the examples of thoſe who wander in ſtrange countries, or are in priſon, or viſited with ſickneſs, and of thoſe that are expoſed to ſtorms and tempeſts upon the ſea. He makes mention likewiſe of famine, of drought, of the humbling of great men, and exalting them of low degree; and ſhews, that God does all this with wiſdom and juſtice, and for the good of mankind.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS very inſtructive Pſalm ſerves to teach us, that God does wiſely diſpenſe all that happens to men; and that when they are fugitives, and diſperſed, captives, ſick, and in danger of periſhing, afflicted with famine, or in ſome other manner, it is God that makes them paſs through all thoſe trials, that he may engage them to call upon him, and have recourſe to his power and goodneſs. This Pſalm therefore ſhews us, that it is the duty of perſons in affliction to apply themſelves to God by humble and fervent prayer for deliverance out of all their misfortunes; that when men cry to God in their diſtreſs, and turn to him, he takes

takes pity on them, and delivers them from all their troubles; and that it is the duty of thoſe, who, by the help of God, have eſcaped any great ſickneſs, danger of death, or other afflictions, to ſhew their gratitude to him all their lives, and to celebrate his loving-kindneſs before all. Thoſe who have been in affliction ſhould take particular notice of theſe things. It is very common with men, to fly to God in their ſufferings; but when the danger is over, they generally forget the divine favours, and fall into ingratitude. What is ſaid in this Pſalm is very inſtructive, and engages us ſeriouſly to reflect upon what happens in the world, and eſpecially to ourſelves; that we may learn from thence to fear God. This is the uſe we ought to make of this Pſalm, as we are directed in the laſt verſe, in theſe words; *Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things: Even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.*

PSALM CVIII.

DAVID praiſes God with great zeal, and implores his aſſiſtance; he likewiſe aſſures himſelf, that by the Divine aid he ſhould reign over the whole land of *Iſrael*, and ſhould be victorious over the *Moabites*, *Edomites*, and all thoſe who oppoſed him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS Pſalm ſhould inſpire us with great devotion and ardent zeal to praiſe God, and to celebrate his mercy and truth. II. It ſhould fill the ſaints with a firm truſt in the Divine aſſiſtance, and convince them that thoſe whom God loves will always be delivered. III. *David* teaches us, that all our ſtrength and all our happineſs depends on God;

that human aſſiſtance is but vanity; and that therefore we ought to fix our hope in God alone.

PSALM CIX.

IN this Pſalm *David* deſcribes the malice and injuſtice of his enemies, and threatens them with the curſe of God.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn in general from this Pſalm, that as God protects good men, his curſe does uſually purſue the wicked, and chiefly thoſe who oppreſs the innocent, who are cruel and hard-hearted, and injure others; that this curſe does even cleave to their poſterity; and that the evil which they have done or wiſhed to others, often falls upon themſelves. But care muſt be taken not to pervert this Pſalm in a criminal and impious manner, by imagining we are at any time allowed to wiſh that the vengeance of God may fall upon thoſe who hate us and do us hurt. *David* here ſpeaks in quality of a king choſen by God, and of a prophet. He rather foretold than deſired the deſtruction of his enemies; he even returned them good for evil, as he himſelf ſays, and love for hatred. Beſides, what is here ſaid regards only the enemies of God, and certain great ſinners, ſuch as *Judas*, to whom ſome of the words of this Pſalm are applied in the New Teſtament. But above all let us remember, that a Chriſtian ſhould hate no man, and that the character we bear as diſciples of *Jeſus Chriſt*, obliges us to love all men, even our greateſt enemies, to pray for them with all our heart, and to wiſh and to do to them all the good in our power.

PSALM

PSALM CX.

THE Holy Spirit in this Pſalm foretels that the Meſſiah ſhould be exalted to the right hand of God; that he ſhould be the king and high prieſt of the church; that he ſhould glorioufly eſtabliſh his kingdom, and triumph over all his enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

JESUS Chriſt himſelf and the apoſtles, teach us in the New Teſtament, that this Pſalm relates to the Meſſiah. We here learn the divine dignity of his perſon; the nature of his kingdom, which was to be ſpiritual and heavenly; the ſupreme glory to which God would exalt him, by ſetting him at his right hand; and the power by which he would eſtabliſh his empire, by the deſtruction of his enemies. The Holy Spirit here likewiſe foretels, that the Meſſiah ſhould be not only a powerful king, but alſo our high prieſt, who ſhould atone for our ſins; as St. *Paul* proves in the ſeventh chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*. This Pſalm teaches us further, that thoſe who are the ſubjects of this glorious king, ſhould be a willing people, and that they would ſubmit without reſtraint, willingly and joyfully obeying him. This Pſalm therefore inſtructs us in our privileges and our duty. Laſtly, What is here ſaid ſuffers us not to doubt but *Jeſus Chriſt* will for ever reign over the faithful, and that he will one day tread under his feet all his and our enemies; which will be eſpecially accompliſhed when he ſhall deſtroy death, our laſt enemy, by a happy reſurrection, as St. *Paul* remarks in the fifteenth chapter of the Firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*.

PSALM CXI.

THE Pſalmiſt praiſes God on account of his wonderful works, and above all, for the temporal and ſpiritual mercies he had beſtowed on the people of *Iſrael.*

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought to join our praiſes to thoſe which are offered to God in this ſong; we have even more reaſon than the faithful of old had, to confeſs that the works of God are great and wonderful; that he is merciful, righteous, and full of compaſſion; that he has remembered his covenant, and ſent ſalvation and redemption to his people. Theſe ineſtimable bleſſings ſhould excite us to praiſe God continually for all theſe things with our whole heart, and declare his goodneſs and marvellous works before men, and particularly in the aſſembly of the faithful. *David* gives us at the end of this Pſalm, a very uſeful and important leſſon, while he tells us, that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom:* And that *all they have a good underſtanding that do his commandments.* This teaches us, that the fear of God is the way to attain to true wiſdom and ſolid happineſs, and therefore that this ought to be our chief ſtudy.

PSALM CXII.

THIS Pſalm contains a deſcription of true holineſs, and of the happineſs of the godly.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm teaches us, what are the diſtinguiſhing characters of true piety, and how great the happineſs

happineſs of thoſe is who are poſſeſſed with it. I. The character which the Pſalmiſt gives of good men is, that they fear the Lord; that they take great delight in his commandments; that they are juſt and ſincere; that they conduct all their affairs with uprightneſs; that they are kind and full of compaſſion, and love to give alms to the poor. II. The prophet teaches us next, that thoſe who live thus are perfectly happy; that God bleſſes them in their perſons, in their poſterity, and in their poſſeſſions; that they enjoy peace of conſcience; that they fear no evil, always truſting in the Lord; and that their righteouſneſs and their memory ſhall remain for ever. Theſe are very important inſtructions, which ſhould powerfully encourage us to the ſtudy and practice of piety.

PSALM CXIII.

THIS is a Pſalm of praiſe, and an exhortation to acknowledge and declare the glory of God, and his infinite power, which appear in the works of his providence, and eſpecially in his exalting and bleſſing thoſe whom he delights in.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm ſhould excite us to praiſe the name of the Lord, and continue to publiſh his glory, which appears every where with ſo much luſtre; and to celebrate that adorable Providence with which he governs all things here below, and by which he exalteth and humbleth men as he pleaſes. Theſe conſiderations are powerful motives to engage us to fear God, to depend entirely upon him, and to put our whole truſt in his mercy.

PSALM CXIV.

WE have here a noble deſcription of the power which God diſplayed when the *Iſraelites* came out of *Egypt*, when they paſſed the Red-ſea, and when the river of *Jordan* was dried up at their entrance into the land of *Canaan*.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE two reflections are to be made upon this Pſalm: I. That the miracles which God formerly wrought in behalf of his people, at their coming out of *Egypt*, and when they paſſed through the Red-ſea, and over the river *Jordan*, are inconteſtable proofs of the power, greatneſs, and majeſty of God; and that therefore we ought to celebrate that infinite power, and to fear that great God, whom nothing can reſiſt. II. The next reflection is, that ſince the wonders mentioned in this Pſalm, are not ſo conſiderable as thoſe which God has wrought for us in the work of our redemption, we have more reaſon than the *Jews* to exalt the power and goodneſs of our God, and to bleſs him for ever.

PSALM CXV.

THIS Pſalm has three parts. In the firſt, which is a prayer, the *Iſraelites* beg of God to deliver them for the glory of his name. The ſecond deſcribes the vanity of idols, and the folly of idolaters. In the third, the Pſalmiſt repreſents the happineſs of thoſe who ſerve and fear God, and put their truſt in him.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm teaches us three things: I. That when God does good to men, he is led to do it, not by any merit in them, but by his own pure mercy; which ought to be the foundation of our truſt, when we direct our prayer to him. II. What is here ſaid of the folly and ſtupidity of idolaters, who worſhip dead idols, and the works of mens hands, tended to diſſuade the *Iſraelites* from the worſhip of falſe gods, and the more effectually to prevent their forſaking the worſhip of the true God. This too engages us to bleſs the Lord for delivering us from idolatry, by making himſelf known to us; and ſhould teach us to ſerve him with purity, zeal, and fidelity. III. We here ſee how happy thoſe are who worſhip God and fear him; ſince the Pſalmiſt aſſures us, that God is the help and buckler of all thoſe that truſt in him; that they are bleſſed of the Lord, who has made the heavens and the earth; and that his favours are extended to them and their poſterity. Theſe glorious promiſes ſhould prevail on us more effectually to fear God, and to expect all our happineſs from his bleſſing alone.

PSALM CXVI.

DAVID gives thanks to God with holy tranſports of zeal, joy, and love, for the deliverances he had granted him, and for all the good things he had received from him.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Pſalm the devotion and zeal of king *David* appear with moſt extraordinary luſtre. We ſhould particularly here obſerve with what ſentiments of joy and gratitude he celebrates the wonderful deliverances

which God had vouchſafed him in the great dangers he had been expoſed to, with what zeal he praiſes him, and vows to love and obey him. From this pious prince we learn, that when God has beſtowed any particular favour on us, and eſpecially when he has delivered us from any great danger, it is our duty to love him, to bleſs his holy name, to perform our vows, and praiſe him in the preſence of all his people; and above all, to walk before him all the days of our life; and to teſtify our gratitude to him, not only by our words, but by all our actions. This is what we are in an eſpecial manner to do for the ſpiritual favours he beſtows upon us, when he pardons our ſins, and delivers us from condemnation and death, and receives us into the number of his children and ſervants. The ſight and ſenſe of ſuch ineſtimable bleſſings ſhould fill all thoſe who partake of them with joy and conſolation, and make them ſay with the Pſalmiſt: *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. What ſhall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of ſalvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, in the preſence of all his people. Praiſe the Lord.*

PSALM CXVII.

THE Pſalmiſt invites all the nations of the earth to praiſe God becauſe of his goodneſs and mercy.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm invites us to one of the moſt important duties of religion, which is to praiſe God continually for his goodneſs, and confeſs that his loving-kindneſs is very great towards us, and endureth for ever.

PSALM

PSALM CXVIII.

DAVID exhorts all the *Iſraelites* to celebrate the goodneſs of God. He bleſſes him with great zeal, for making him triumph over his enemies. The people anſwer his invitations by bleſſing the Lord, and praying for the proſperity of *David*. The laſt part of this Pſalm relates to our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm, as many others do, invites us to praiſe God, and to celebrate his goodneſs and mercy. *David*, being delivered from all the dangers he had been expoſed to, returns moſt hearty thanks to God, and invites the prieſts, the rulers of the people, and all the *Iſraelites*, to join with him. We ſhould all be animated with the ſame zeal; and perſons of every order, rank and condition, ſhould unite in the diſcharge of this duty, and acknowledge *that God is good, and that his mercy endureth for ever*. This Pſalm, which the *Jews* ſung at their feaſts, ſhould be made uſe of by Chriſtians in giving thanks to God, not only for the favours and deliverances, whether public or private, which he grants them; but above all, for the coming of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. The Spirit of God ſignifies in this Pſalm, that the Meſſiah ſhould be rejected by the chief of the *Jews*; and that notwithſtanding, he ſhould become the king and head of the church; which was fulfilled when *Jeſus Chriſt* was crucified, and when, after his reſurrection, he aſcended into heaven, and his kingdom was eſtabliſhed in the world. Let us therefore celebrate the power and goodneſs of God, which have appeared in this wonderful work; and let the conſideration of theſe ſalutary events lead us to ſay with *David*, *The ſtone which*

which the builders refuſed is become the head-ſtone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. Bleſſed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

PSALM CXIX.

THE 119th Pſalm is an admirable deſcription of the excellence of the law of God, and of the happineſs of thoſe that keep it. This Pſalm is full of the moſt fervent and affecting devotion, interſperſed with many beautiful prayers, with various ſtrains of piety, and with a great number of excellent rules for the conduct of life: Therefore the reading of it may be attended with great advantage, provided it be read with ſuitable attention and devotion.

PSALM CXIX. 1——32.

AT the entrance of this Pſalm king *David* repreſents the happineſs of thoſe who keep the commandments of God. He teſtifies that his intention and deſire is, to apply himſelf entirely to it, and he begs of God, with great zeal, that he would give him grace to underſtand his holy law, and to obſerve it continually.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM the firſt part of this Pſalm we learn, that man's greateſt happineſs conſiſts in walking uprightly, in keeping the law of the Lord, and in ſeeking his teſtimonies with his whole heart; that by his divine law young people, and all men in general, ought to regulate their behaviour; and that they who do ſo will never fall into ſhame or miſery. Theſe con-

ſiderations engage us to chooſe, as *David* did, the commandments of God for our portion, to keep them in our heart, to make them the ſubject of our converſation, to take pleaſure in them, and rejoice in the obſervation of them, more than if he had all the riches in the world. To ſecure this happineſs to ourſelves, let us beg of God to teach us his ſtatutes, and open our eyes that we may ſee the wonders of his law; to keep us from lying and wickedneſs, and to make us know the way of his holy commandments, that we may walk in them with faith and perſeverance to the end of our lives.

PSALM CXIX. 33——72.

DAVID ſeveral times beſeeches God to give him grace rightly to underſtand and keep his laws. He prays him to ſupport him by that means under all his trials; he declares, that the word of God had ſtrengthened and comforted him under all his misfortunes. He confeſſes, that it was good for him to have been afflicted, that he might learn to keep the ſtatutes of the Lord; he proteſts that he will apply himſelf to them more and more; that he had choſen the law of God for his inheritance; and that he valued it above all the goods and advantages of the world.

REFLECTIONS.

THE uſe to be made of the reading this part of the 119th Pſalm, is to entertain the ſame pious ſentiments which are here expreſſed, and to beg of God, with *David*, to teach us the way of his ſtatutes; to give us underſtanding to know and keep them; to incline our hearts to obedience, and to turn them away from vanity, covetouſneſs and every evil way; to make us always ſenſible of the effects of his mercy,

by

by ſupporting us in all dangers; and above all, that he would never deprive us of his word and grace. *David* next teaches us, that good men make an open and public profeſſion of the fear of God, and are never tired with ſpeaking of him and of his holy laws. When they ſee wicked men, that blaſpheme God and inſult the righteous, they abhor their impiety, and dread the judgments that threaten them; they ſtrengthen themſelves more and more in the love of God's law; they take it for their portion and inheritance; they meditate upon it day and night, and ſeek the company of thoſe that fear God and keep his commandments. Laſtly, From what *David* here ſays, we learn the uſefulneſs of afflictions, and are led to adore the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, who afflicts and chaſtiſes men, that they may learn to obſerve his word. This was the advantage *David* made of his troubles, and this taught him to prefer that divine word before all riches, and every thing in the world that is eſteemed moſt valuable.

PSALM CXIX. 73——104.

DAVID continues to ſhew his zeal and love for the law of God, and begs him to enlighten and comfort him. He declares, that the law of God had been his hope in all his troubles; that he had adhered to it more and more; that he conſidered it as the moſt perfect thing in the world; that he loved it above all things; that it afforded him all the underſtanding, and all the wiſdom which he ſtood in need of; and that he found an unſpeakable pleaſure and ſweetneſs in the practice of it.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS part of the 119th Pſalm, ſets before us the great benefits which ariſe from the knowledge and obſervation of the law of God. *David*'s manner of ſpeaking ſhews, that thoſe who give themſelves up to it, are never confounded; and that in their afflictions they always meet with that help and comfort which is needful for them. He teaches us, that the evils which the righteous ſuffer are ſo far from making them forſake the law of God, that they engage them to adhere to it more firmly; and that this is their ſupport under all their trials. *David* aſſures us, that this law is the moſt perfect, and moſt excellent thing in the world; that thoſe who are enlightened by this divine light, ſurpaſs the moſt prudent in wiſdom and underſtanding; and that all earthly pleaſures and delights are not comparable to the pleaſure and ſweetneſs we taſte in the knowledge and love of the divine law. Theſe are the ſentiments which we ought all to entertain, and which we ſhould beg of God to confirm us in more and more.

PSALM CXIX. 105——144.

DAVID ſtill inſiſts upon the uſefulneſs of the law of God, and vows to obſerve it all the days of his life. He ſhews, that God confounds the wicked, and all thoſe that depart from the right way, but is the ſupport of thoſe that fear him; that the righteous have nothing to apprehend from the wicked, and that no harm can happen to them. He then reſumes his deſcription of the excellence of the law of God; expreſſes his ſincere concern to ſee it broken; proteſts he will always love it, and apply himſelf to it more and more: and beſeeches the Lord to increaſe his knowledge of it.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections which this portion of ſcripture preſents us with, are, I. That the word of God is *a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths*; and that thoſe who are enlightened by this divine light, and walk in the way which it preſcribes, cannot err. II. It appears from hence, that the faithful are ſincerely attached to that part of God's word which preſcribes their duty, and contains the holy laws which he has given us for the conduct of our lives. They eſteem it their perpetual inheritance, and make it the joy of their heart. They vow to love and obey God; ſaying with *David, I have ſworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments*; and they beſeech God, that he would give them grace to perform their vow. When they conſider the impiety which reigns in the world, and the judgments of God which overtake thoſe that forſake him, they are ſincerely grieved, and full of terror and amazement; when they ſee others forſake God's laws, they more firmly adhere to it; and whatever condition they are in, whether it be affliction or proſperity, that divine law is all their pleaſure, and all their conſolation.

PSALM CXIX. 145——176.

DAVID calls God to his aſſiſtance, prays him to look upon his affliction, and to defend his cauſe againſt the great ones that perſecuted him. He declares, that all his deſire is to keep the law of his God, to praiſe him and glorify him during his whole life.

REFLECTIONS.

THE inſtructions which this laſt part of the 119th Pſalm ſuggeſts to us, are the following: I. That in

in all our troubles we ſhould apply ourſelves to God, to aſk of him, not only the deliverances we ſtand in need of, but, above all things, grace to pleaſe and obey him. II. That the law of God ſhould be our greateſt delight, and to meditate on his divine word the general employment of our lives. III. That God ſees the ſufferings of his people, and hears their prayers; but that he is far from the wicked, and will not deliver them. IV. That God has annexed a glorious reward, and perfect happineſs to the obſervation of his law. This *David* aſſures us, when he ſays, that *there is great peace to thoſe who love his law, and that nothing ſhall offend them.* The laſt reflection is, That we ought to dedicate our whole lives to God, deſire to employ them in his ſervice, and to the glory of his name; and beſeech him to grant us all neceſſary aſſiſtance to this purpoſe. This is *David*'s earneſt prayer at the end of this Pſalm, where he ſays, *Lord, let my ſoul live, that it may praiſe thee. I have gone aſtray like a loſt ſheep; ſeek thy ſervant, and I will not forget thy commandments.*

General Reflections *on* Psalm CXIX.

THAT this Pſalm may be read with improvement, it will be convenient to add to the particular reflections already made, theſe three principal reflections: I. That the law of God is moſt excellent, and its effects moſt wonderful. *David* teaches us, that this divine law is the moſt perfect; that it is a heavenly light which enlightens us; that it gives us underſtanding; that it purifies and rejoices the heart; that it ſupports us in afflictions; that it gives us unſpeakable peace of conſcience; and that it is infinitely better than all the treaſures and riches in this world. II. In this Pſalm we learn to diſtinguiſh good men. They are ſincere and upright in their ways; they do that

that which is right; they walk in the law of the Lord, and meditate on it day and night; they love God and his word with all their heart; they abſtain from evil, and from the company of the wicked; they join themſelves to the righteous; they are ſtruck with terror at the ſight of God's judgments; they truſt in him, and are calm and patient under afflictions. III. Laſtly, This Pſalm is full of many excellent prayers, which ſhould be continually in our mouths and in our hearts, begging God to enlighten our minds, to teach us his law, to incline our hearts to obey him; that he would take care of us, and guide us always by his Providence and his Holy Spirit. Theſe are the inſtructions which this Pſalm furniſhes us with; for which purpoſe we ought to read and meditate upon it very frequently.

PSALM CXX.

THE prophet begs of God to defend him from the deceits and calumnies of the wicked; and complains that he is forced to live among them.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm teaches, I. That good men may be expoſed to calumny and the malice of men, but that God protects and delivers them. II. That it is a great affliction to good men to live among the wicked and ungodly. Laſtly, That it is the character of the righteous to love peace, as it is of the wicked to be addicted to confuſion and trouble.

PSALM CXXI.

THE author of this Pſalm teſtifies, that he firmly relied on the Divine aſſiſtance; and that he was fully perſuaded that God would always watch for the ſafety of his people, and of all the faithful.

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REFLECTIONS.

THE ſubſtance of this Pſalm is, that our help cometh from God alone; that he watches over his church, and over all the righteous; that he preſerves them in all dangers, and that he will never forſake them. This doctrine ſhould fill the faithful with ſure confidence in God, and confirm them more and more in his fear and love.

PSALM CXXII.

DAVID expreſſes the zeal and love he had for the houſe of God, and for the city of *Jeruſalem*; he prays for the proſperity of that city, and vows to promote with all his power the glory of God, and the good of the people of *Iſrael*.

REFLECTIONS.

DAVID's great zeal for the temple and city of *Jeruſalem*, and for the tribes of *Iſraël*, and the vows he made upon that occaſion, inſtruct princes and magiſtrates and all the true members of the church, to concern themſelves for the public tranquillity, and for the good of civil ſociety; but above all, for religion, and for the ſervice of God; to pray continually for the peace of the church, and join their labours to their prayers, by doing all that is in their power for its good and edification.

PSALM CXXIII.

THE children of *Iſrael*, being oppreſſed and perſecuted by their enemies, implore the divine aſſiſtance.

REFLECTIONS.

THOSE who are expoſed to the contempt, perſecution, and cruelty of the wicked, ſhould learn from this Pſalm, to look up continually to God, that he would have compaſſion on them; and to place all their truſt in his help; believing that God will never forſake thoſe who ſerve him faithfully and ſuffer for his ſake.

PSALM CXXIV.

IN this Pſalm the *Iſraelites* acknowledge that God had delivered them on many occaſions; and that without his protection they ſhould have been deſtroyed long before.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm is ſtill better ſuited to the Chriſtian than to the *Jewiſh* church. What is here ſaid, engages us to reflect upon the different conditions the church of *Chriſt* has been in; and to conſider, that notwithſtanding the attempts which Satan and the world have made againſt it, ever ſince its birth, it ſtill ſubſiſts. From whence we may conclude, that God will always be its ſtrength and ſupport, and will never permit it to be deſtroyed. Thus it is with all true believers, ſince it is impoſſible God ſhould forſake them, or ceaſe to love them and take care of them.

PSALM CXXV.

I. *DAVID* deſcribes the ſtedfaſtneſs of thoſe that truſt in God, and his protection of *Jeruſalem*, and of the children of *Iſrael*. II. He ſays, that if good men are afflicted, it is not for ever; whereas thoſe

thoſe that forſake God periſh at laſt in a miſerable manner.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm repreſents to us in a few words the happy condition of thoſe who fear God and put their truſt in him. The Pſalmiſt teaches us, that nothing can move them; that God is always ready for their defence; that if he ſuffers them to be afflicted, he has regard to their weakneſs; and that he ſoftens and ſhortens their troubles. He likewiſe aſſures us, that God always does good to the righteous, and to thoſe that are upright in heart; whereas thoſe who wander out of the right way, fall at laſt into deſtruction. This meditation furniſhes believers with powerful motives to be ever calm and ſerene, to put their whole confidence in God, and to be more ſtrictly attached to their duty.

PSALM CXXVI.

THIS is a ſong of thankſgiving, in which the *Jews* rejoice at the wonderful deliverance which God had granted them in bringing them out of captivity; and they pray him to finiſh their reſtoration.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm engages us to reflect on the wonderful things which God has done in all times for his people, by delivering them contrary to all appearance, from the power of their enemies. This Pſalm aſſures us, moreover, that if the church, or the righteous, are in affliction and in tears, God gives them at laſt occaſion to rejoice; and in general, when men have been tried and humbled by affliction, he makes gladneſs ſucceed to ſorrow; ſo that, as the *Jews*

here expreſs it, *they that ſow in tears, ſhall reap in joy.*

PSALM CXXVII.

THIS Pſalm declares, that all the care that is taken for the proſperity of cities and families, is unprofitable without the Divine protection; and that he in mercy gives children to thoſe whom he deſigns to bleſs.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE we learn, I. That it is not ſo much the care which men take, as the bleſſing of God, that makes ſtates, cities, and families ſubſiſt; and therefore that magiſtrates and heads of families, ought to labour to bring this bleſſing upon them. II. That God gives children, and that we ought to eſteem them a particular bleſſing; ſince if we bring them up in virtue and godlineſs they will be the joy and glory of their parents, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.

PSALM CXXVIII.

THIS Pſalm ſpeaks of the happineſs of the godly, and of the temporal bleſſings beſtowed upon them by God, in proſpering their labours, and in giving them children and a happy poſterity.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm aſſures us, that God bleſſes the labour and the families of thoſe that fear him and walk in his ways. Though the temporal bleſſings which were formerly promiſed to the *Jews*, are not the chief things which Chriſtians ought to aſpire after; yet they are to be conſidered as a reward of piety,

and

and to be received with thankfulneſs. Godlineſs has the promiſe of the life that now is; God always bleſſes thoſe families where piety prevails, and does particularly ſhower down upon them ſpiritual bleſſings; and at laſt exalts them who live in innocence to the ſupreme happineſs which he has prepared for them in heaven.

PSALM CXXIX.

THE prophet exhorts the church to acknowledge, that though they had been often perſecuted, God had not forſaken them; and he foretels, that all the enemies of the church ſhould be deſtroyed.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is ſaid in this Pſalm engages us to conſider, that the church has been often aſſaulted, both under the Old Teſtament and under the New; but that God has always preſerved it, and that its enemies have never been able to deſtroy it. This ought to confirm us in our belief, that the church and all its true members will for ever ſubſiſt; and that all thoſe who ſet themſelves againſt them, ſhall have nothing but ſhame and confuſion for their portion.

PSALM CXXX.

DAVID here implores the mercy of God, and the pardon of his ſins; and likewiſe expreſſes his confidence in the Divine goodneſs.

REFLECTIONS.

THE Pſalmiſt here gives us three leſſons of inſtruction. I. That if God ſhould examine us in the rigour of his juſtice, none would be found righteous before him: wherefore we ought all to have re-

courſe to his mercy, and ſay, with the deepeſt humility, *If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?* II. That if God is inclined to pardon men, it is to engage them to fear him; and that without this fear there is no pardon to be expected from him. This is expreſſed in theſe words, *there is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared.* III. That God has always been and ever will be the defender of his church, and of true believers.

PSALM CXXXI.

DAVID proteſts ſolemnly in this Pſalm, that he had not entertained proud and haughty thoughts of himſelf, but had always ſtudied to live in innocence and humility.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm expreſſes the ſentiments which all the children of God ought to entertain: They are to be humble, not aiming at high things, but reſembling little children in innocence and ſimplicity. What *David* teaches us on this head, is the ſame with what our Lord more fully recommends in the Goſpel, when he tells us, that if we become not as little children he will not acknowledge us for his diſciples, nor ſhall we enter into the kingdom of heaven.

PSALM CXXXII.

I. THE author of this Pſalm, which is probably *David*, here mentions the vow which that prince had made, to take no reſt till the ark of the covenant was brought to *Jeruſalem*, and divine ſervice eſtabliſhed; and he praiſes God that his vow had been accompliſhed. II. He hopes that God, according to his promiſes, would bleſs his poſterity; and he prays for the prieſts, for the Levites, and for all the people.

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REFLECTIONS.

I. THE vow mentioned in this Pſalm, which *David* made to eſtabliſh divine ſervice, is a mark of his piety. From hence great men, magiſtrates, and all men in general, ought to learn, that the glory of God, and his true worſhip, is what they ſhould deſire with the greateſt fervency, and procure to the utmoſt of their power. II. The favour God ſhewed *David*, in enabling him to execute his pious deſign, ſhews us, that God bleſſes thoſe undertakings that are formed with a good intention. III. The choice which God had made of *Sion* for the place of his worſhip; and the promiſes with which he had engaged to dwell there for ever to bleſs and proſper it, are to be applied to the Chriſtian church, in which he dwells in a more particular manner, and wherein he is to be worſhipped and adored unto the end of the world. Laſtly, We ought all of us, in imitation of the Pſalmiſt, continually to pray for the preſervation of the church, for a bleſſing on its miniſters, and for proſperity to all its members.

PSALM CXXXIII.

THIS Pſalm repreſents the happineſs of thoſe that live in unity and peace, and the bleſſings which God beſtows upon them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE inſtruction which we receive from this Pſalm is, that nothing is more agreeable to God than peace and unity; and that his moſt valuable bleſſings are beſtowed on thoſe who live in good harmony with each other; which ſhould be of great weight to incline us to live together in chriſtian and brotherly love.

PSALM CXXXIV.

THIS Pſalm is an exhortation addreſſed to the miniſters of the old temple, in which they are invited to praiſe God.

REFLECTIONS.

THE miniſters of God ſhould learn from this Pſalm, that as the prieſts and Levites were by their office called to praiſe God day and night in his temple, and to pray for the people of *Iſrael*; ſo are the miniſters of the Chriſtian church, by their office, in a particular manner, called to bleſs and praiſe continually God's holy name, and to pray without ceaſing for the proſperity of the church.

PSALM CXXXV.

I. THE prophet exhorts the Levites to praiſe God, to proclaim the infinite power by which he created all things; and above all, to celebrate the wonders which he formerly wrought for his people, in delivering them out of *Egypt*, and putting them in poſſeſſion of the land of *Canaan*. II. He deſcribes the vanity of idols, and the folly of idolaters.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm engages us, no leſs than the *Iſraelites*, to bleſs God, and to celebrate his power, wiſdom and goodneſs, which appear in the creation and government of the world; and chiefly to acknowledge his mercy in chooſing us to be his people. If he delivered the children of *Iſrael* from *Egyptian* bondage, and deſtroyed the kings of *Canaan* to ſettle them in that country, *Jeſus Chriſt* has done for us much

much greater wonders of power and love: he has deſtroyed the idolatry which reigned in the world; he has delivered us from condemnation and death, and admitted us into his church. It is therefore meet and right that this Almighty and All-gracious God ſhould be for ever praiſed; and that all thoſe who fear him, eſpecially his miniſters and ſervants, ſhould join together in praiſing him, and ſaying, *Bleſſed be the Lord who dwelleth in Sion. Praiſe the Lord.*

PSALM CXXXVI.

IN this Pſalm of praiſe the *Iſaelites* celebrate the goodneſs and mercy of God, as they appear in the works of the creation, and in the miracles he had wrought for them, when their fathers came out of *Egypt*, and entered into the land of *Canaan*. It muſt be obſerved, that throughout this whole Pſalm the Levites and the people anſwered alternately, and in every verſe praiſe God with theſe words, *For his mercy endureth for ever*. This form of praiſe was made uſe of at that time, and conſecrated in a particular manner to praiſe God in the temple.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to make two reflections upon this Pſalm: I. The firſt is, that we have as great reaſon to bleſs God as the *Jews* had, when we contemplate the wonders of creation and providence, the miracles which God formerly wrought in behalf of his people; but above all are we to praiſe the infinite mercy and divine power manifeſted in the work of our redemption. II. The next reflection relates to theſe words, repeated in every verſe of this Pſalm, *For his mercy endureth for ever*; which was a form conſecrated by cuſtom to the uſe of divine worſhip. Theſe words teach us, that the goodneſs of God appears in all his works,

works, and is the ſource of all the bleſſings we enjoy; and therefore that we ought likewiſe to celebrate it with continual praiſes, with great gratitude, and with all the zeal and fervency we are able.

PSALM CXXXVII.

I. IN this Pſalm the *Jews*, in captivity at *Babylon*, expreſs their great affliction to ſee themſelves in an exile condition, and their zeal for *Jeruſalem*. II. The prophet foretels the deſtruction of the *Edomites*, who had rejoiced to ſee the city laid waſte; he foretels likewiſe the deſtruction of the *Babylonians*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE ſentiments of the captive *Jews* in this Pſalm are the ſame with thoſe of all true believers. I. They have a great zeal for the church; they cannot rejoice when they ſee it expoſed to ſufferings; and would rather forget themſelves, and their own concerns, than forget the intereſt of God's glory. II. The deſtruction of the *Edomites* and *Babylonians*, foretold in this Pſalm, which happened a few years after the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, teaches us, that God revenges the evils done to his church; and that he ſeverely puniſhes perſecutors and thoſe who join with them, as well as thoſe who inſult the miſerable, and rejoice at the evil which befals them.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

I. DAVID, inſpired with a holy zeal, declares that he will praiſe God publicly for all his favours, and invites all kings and nations to praiſe the Lord with him. II. He entreats God to continue to bleſs and protect him, and teſtifies his entire confidence in his aſſiſtance and promiſes.

RE-

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN this hymn, the fervent zeal which animates true believers appears in a ſtrong light; it inclines them to rejoice in God, to worſhip him, to ſing his praiſes, and declare his loving-kindneſs before all men, even before the great men of the earth, that they may learn to fear God, and ſhew forth his glory. II. We ſee in this Pſalm that the great God, who dwells in the heavens, knows all that is done here below; that he does not diſdain to take care of men; but eſpecially, that his eyes are open upon his children; that he is with them in adverſity; ſo that all thoſe who fear him may ſay with an entire confidence, *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forſake not the works of thine own hands.*

PSALM CXXXIX.

I. DAVID ſolemnly acknowledges in this Pſalm that God is preſent every where; and that all, even the moſt ſecret things, are perfectly known to him. II. He praiſes the infinite wiſdom of God, which appears in a particular manner in the formation of man; and being ſenſibly affected with the wonderful works of God, he declares, that the contemplation of them will always excite him to bleſs and fear him, and rejoice in him. Laſtly, He ſays, that his confidence in the divine goodneſs and power would ſupport him againſt all the aſſaults of his enemies, that he will never fear them, nor ever have any familiarity with them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought to conſider this Pſalm with great attention. This is one of thoſe places of ſcripture,

ture, which ſpeak moſt clearly of the Divine preſence and knowledge. *David* teaches us very expreſsly, that God is every where; that his knowledge is infinite, as well as his power; that nothing is hid from his all-ſeeing eye; and that wherever we are, he is witneſs not only of our words and actions, but even of our moſt ſecret thoughts. Theſe truths ſhould make a deep impreſſion upon us, as they did upon *David*, and engage us to live always as in God's ſight, and to fear that great God, who is preſent every where, and, as nothing can be hid from him, will judge us according to our works. To this reflection, which is the principal, we muſt add theſe three particular conſiderations: I. That the wonderful manner in which God has given us life, affords us abundant motives to acknowledge his power and goodneſs, and to employ both our ſouls and bodies in his ſervice. II. That the power and goodneſs of God ought to fill the righteous with great confidence, and ſecure them againſt all fear of men. The laſt reflection is, that if we love God, we ſhall hate every thing that God hates, we ſhall ſhun vice, and the company of the wicked, but without hating them perſonally; herein imitating our heavenly father, who hates unrighteouſneſs, but bears with ſinners, doing them good continually, and uſing great patience towards them, to bring them to repentance.

PSALM CXL.

DAVID intreats God to defend him from the wiles and malice of thoſe that ſought his ruin, and threatens them with the Divine vengeance.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to obſerve, that God defends the righteous from the violence of the wicked; that his vengeance purſues cruel and unjuſt men, and thoſe who ſlander and deceive their neighbours; that how formidable ſoever their power may appear, he defeats all their deſigns; and if he ſuffers the innocent to be oppreſſed for a while, he ſhews at laſt that he is their protector; and gives them occaſion to own and celebrate his power, juſtice and goodneſs. In this view, and with ſuch a ſpirit as this, and not with a ſpirit of reſentment and revenge againſt them that have offended us, ought we to read and meditate on this Pſalm.

PSALM CXLI.

I. *DAVID*, expoſed to the injuſtice and calumny of ſeveral who perſecuted him, beſeeches the Lord graciouſly to receive his prayers. II. He begs of God grace, that he may not ſin with his tongue by giving way to murmuring, and that he may not be ſeduced by ſinners, but he deſires to be reproved and corrected by the righteous; he confides in God's help, and is perſuaded, that he would deliver him from them that ſought his ruin.

REFLECTIONS.

THE uſe we are to make of this Pſalm is, I. To join with king *David* in the prayers which are here offered up to God, humbly beſeeching him, favourably to receive our requeſts, and that our prayers may aſcend into his preſence; that he would preſerve us from offending him, either by raſh words or evil thoughts; and that he would not ſuffer us to be drawn away by the wicked, which is the deſign of

of this excellent prayer: *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practiſe wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.* II. *David* teaches us to receive with pleaſure and thankfulneſs the warnings and corrections of good men; ſaying with *David*, as all pious men ſhould do, *Let the righteous ſmite me, it ſhall be a kindneſs; and let him reprove me, it ſhall be an excellent oil.* Laſtly, We find by this Pſalm, that though the condition of the righteous is ſometimes miſerable, yet God always preſerves them, and gives them not over to the will of thoſe who ſeek to deſtroy them.

PSALM CXLII.

DAVID, being hid in the cave of *Adullam*, and ſurrounded by *Saul*'s army, prays God to aſſiſt him in that imminent danger, and vows to return him thanks and praiſe for ſo great a mercy. The hiſtory which occaſioned this Pſalm may be read in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Firſt Book of *Samuel*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS prayer which *David* offered up to God when he was in danger of falling immediately into the hands of *Saul*, teaches us, that to the Lord we muſt apply for the help we ſtand in need of, and the deliverance which God vouchſafed him in this extremity, ſhews, that the confidence of the faithful is never in vain; that God never wants means to deliver them from danger, and to change their ſorrow into joy and thankſgivings.

PSALM

PSALM CXLIII.

KING *David* humbles himſelf before God, by confeſſing his ſins; prays him to have regard to his deplorable condition, favourably to hear his prayer, to guide him by his ſpirit, and to deliver him from the danger he was in.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE prayer which king *David* makes at the beginning of this Pſalm, in theſe words, *Enter not into judgment with thy ſervant; for in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified*; is of ſuch general uſe, that there is no man who has not reaſon to make it with humility and fervency. II. *David*'s application to God in the time of trouble, teaches us, that whatever danger we are in, we ought to ſeek for ſecurity and comfort in prayer, and truſt in God; and to this end we ſhould meditate upon his works, and the many proofs he has given in all ages of his loving-kindneſs towards thoſe that fear him. But whether we are in affliction, or in any other ſtate, we ought, above all things, to beg of God grace to fear him, that we may feel the effects of his love, and be guided by his good ſpirit; offering up continually to him this prayer: *Cauſe me to hear thy loving-kindneſs in the morning; for in thee do I truſt. Cauſe me to know the way wherein I ſhould walk; for I lift up my ſoul unto thee. Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy ſpirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightneſs.* Laſtly, When we obſerve with what warmth *David*, in this and many other Pſalms, beſeeches God to deliver him from thoſe who hated him, we muſt imagine, we have not the ſame reaſons to make that prayer as this king had; but if we have

not

not the ſame reaſon as he had, we ought heartily to implore the Divine aſſiſtance againſt the enemies of our ſalvation, ſince we are always liable to be aſſaulted by them, and they are infinitely more to be feared than our temporal enemies.

PSALM CXLIV.

THIS is a ſong of thankſgiving for the victories and deliverances which God had granted to *David*, and a prayer for the proſperity of the people of *Iſrael*. It is thought *David* compoſed this ſong after he had ſlain *Goliath*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. *DAVID*'s thankſgivings to God for the victories he had obtained, teach us to give glory to God for all the good things that befal us; and that it is he who protects pious kings, and, in general, all that fear him, and who delivers them from the greateſt dangers. II. When God grants us any favour, we ought to add to our praiſes an humble acknowledgement of our own unworthineſs, and ſay, with the moſt profound ſentiments of humility; *Lord, what is man that thou takeſt knowledge of him? or the ſon of man, that thou makeſt account of him?* III. This Pſalm teaches us, that plenty, peace, and temporal proſperity, are the effects of the goodneſs of God and his providence; and that we ought to receive theſe bleſſings with thankfulneſs, and to make a right uſe of them. But let us remember, that theſe temporal bleſſings which the *Jews* aſked of God, and which were promiſed by the covenant made with them, are not the good things which Chriſtians ſhould chiefly look after: Let us be ſtill more ſenſible of the ſpiritual bleſſings which God grants us in the church, and

and which ſecure us the enjoyment of never-ceaſing happineſs. A proſpect of ſuch bleſſings as theſe, gives us greater reaſon than the *Jews* to ſay, *Happy is that people whoſe God is the Lord.*

PSALM CXLV.

I. *DAVID* here praiſes God in a manner full of zeal and love, adores his majeſty and his wondrous works, but eſpecially his goodneſs towards all men, and his love to thoſe who fear and call upon him. This Pſalm may be read with the greateſt advantage and edification.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm is very proper to inflame our zeal, and to encourage us to praiſe God with a fervent devotion. *David* expreſſes, in the moſt affecting terms, the raviſhing joys and holy zeal with which the ſaints meditate upon the wonderful works of the Lord, and celebrate his power, majeſty, truth, and juſtice, and above all his goodneſs and mercy, which are over all his works. *David* teaches us in this Pſalm, that as by the Lord all things were made, ſo by him all things ſubſiſt; that his providence extends even to the beaſts; but his fatherly care he repreſents chiefly over thoſe that fear him; aſſuring us, that God is always near them to defend them; that he hears them when they cry unto him; that he delivers them in their diſtreſs, and grants them their hearts deſire. The conſideration of all theſe things ought to fill us with great love for ſo good a God, lead us to imitate his goodneſs, inſpire us with a ſincere attachment to piety, which procures theſe precious advantages; and animate us with ardent zeal to bleſs him, to declare his praiſes, and to glorify him for ever.

PSALM CXLVI.

THE prophet vows he will praiſe God all the days of his life; and teaches us to truſt in God alone, who is the governor of the world, and takes a particular care of the righteous.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn from this Pſalm, I. That the beſt uſe we can make of our lives, is to employ them wholly in praiſing and glorifying God's holy name. II. That it is a great folly to put our truſt in princes, or in any man, ſince they are mortal, and therefore are mere weakneſs, and even as nothing; but to enjoy true happineſs, we muſt confide alone in God, who is the creator of the world, who loves truth and equity, does right to thoſe that are oppreſſed, and delivers them; and who will reign for ever for the defence of his people and children.

PSALM CXLVII.

THE *Iſraelites* are exhorted to praiſe God on account of the works of the creation, and for the favours he had done for their nation in particular.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm preſents us with two grand motives to induce to love and praiſe God. I. The firſt, which is common to us with the *Jews*, and with all men, is taken from the power and wonderful wiſdom by which he governs the world. We here ſee that it is God who preſerves all things, who ſends ſnow and rain, who cauſes the earth to bring forth its fruit, and who gives plenty and peace; and that

that therefore all thoſe temporal bleſſings ought to be aſcribed to his bounty, and improved to his glory. II. Another cauſe for praiſing God, mentioned in this Pſalm, is taken from the bleſſings God beſtowed on the *Jews*; and particularly, in granting them, together with his protection, the peace and plenty which they enjoyed in the land of *Canaan*, and giving them his holy word and his law. In this reſpect, we have ſtill ſtronger motives to praiſe the Lord, in conſideration of the ſpiritual bleſſings vouchſafed to us; among which, the moſt valuable privilege of all is, to be enlightened by the Goſpel, and by the knowledge of his will. This is a favour which he has not vouchſafed to all people; and therefore we ought to acknowledge the worth of it, poſſeſſing it with thankfulneſs, and uſing it to the honour of his holy name, and to our own ſalvation.

PSALM CXLVIII.

DAVID, in the tranſports of his zeal, invites all the creatures of heaven and earth to praiſe the Lord, but chiefly mankind, and the *Iſraelites* in particular. There is a great deal of beauty and ſublimity in this Pſalm.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Pſalm, as well as in many others, we learn, I. That it is God who has created, who preſerves and governs all the creatures that are in heaven, or upon the earth; the angels, the ſun, the moon, and all the ſtars; that by his will, fire, hail, ſnow, winds, mountains, trees, and the graſs, ſubſiſt in a regular order, and produce the ſeveral effects which we daily obſerve. II. Let us conſider, that as all theſe creatures, except the angels, are deſtitute of reaſon, they are ſaid to praiſe the Lord, only as they afford us

motives to praiſe him, by the wonders which they ſet before us; and therefore, that it is man's duty to bleſs God, as he alone is capable of knowing him by his works. III. We ſee in this Pſalm, that all ſorts of perſons are obliged to diſcharge this duty; that great and ſmall, men and women, young and old, ought all of them to praiſe the name of the Lord. All in general, who have the happineſs to live in the pale of the church, ought to ſignalize their zeal, and join in giving glory to the creator of all things; and it ſhould be our moſt ardent deſire, that the name of the Lord our God may be bleſſed and praiſed by us, and by all creatures, both now and for ever.

PSALM CXLIX.

THIS is a Pſalm of praiſe and thankſgiving, for the victories which the people of *Iſrael* had gained over ſeveral kings, by the divine aſſiſtance.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm ſhould ſtir up all the true members of the church, to ſing and publiſh the praiſes of God, and to rejoice in him continually. And as the *Iſraelites* ſung hymns of joy, becauſe God had made them triumph over their enemies, and the kings that waged war with them; we ought likewiſe to praiſe him for the care he has taken of his church, and for all the favours we have received from him; but chiefly, for ſubduing our ſpiritual enemies, and putting it in our power to triumph over them ourſelves, and to be in all things "more than conquerors through *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord."

PSALM

PSALM CL.

THE Pſalmiſt exhorts all men to praiſe God, becauſe of his glorious majeſty and his wonderful works, and to make uſe of holy inſtruments for that purpoſe. This concludes the whole Book of Pſalms.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Pſalm, which is the laſt of all, ſhould inſpire all of us with a holy zeal to praiſe, without ceaſing, the majeſty of God, his infinite power, and all his adorable perfections. This ought all of us to do, not only with our lips and voice, but chiefly with the heart; remembring, that if the *Jews* in their worſhip made uſe of muſical inſtruments, and many other ceremonies, God requires us to praiſe him and worſhip him, under the Goſpel, chiefly with the heart, and with all poſſible zeal and affection. Let us, all our lives, diſcharge ſo juſt and pleaſing a duty; and let us, to this end, make a good uſe of the many noble exhortations and divine patterns of devotion contained in the *Book of Pſalms*; that after we have praiſed and glorified God upon earth, we may glorify him eternally in the heavens with all the bleſſed ſpirits. *Amen.*

The end of the Book of PSALMS.

THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

ARGUMENT.

This Book of Proverbs, *which has king* Solomon *for its author, consists of two parts:* I. *The nine first chapters, which is the first part, contain the exhortations, instructions, and advices, which Wisdom dictates to mankind.* II. *The other part, which begins at the tenth chapter, is a collection of Proverbs and moral Sentences, upon all manner of subjects. It appears that* Solomon *wrote the first twenty-four chapters: The sentences of that prince, contained in the succeeding chapters, were collected together about* 280 *years after, in the time of king* Hezekiah. *The two last chapters seem to have some other author. The sentences of this Book are short, their stile figurative, after the manner of the Eastern Writers; but their meaning is of the greatest importance, as they furnish us with excellent instructions upon every kind of duty, and suited to all persons and conditions.*

CHAP. I.

THE first chapter contains three parts: I. A preface, which shews the design of this Book, with an exhortation to acquire wisdom. II. A warning to shun wicked men, and not to suf-

fer

ſer ourſelves to be ſeduced by them. III. An invitation which Wiſdom addreſſes to ſinners, in order to their converſion, with ſevere threatnings againſt thoſe that harden their hearts, and refuſe to be converted.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three things in this firſt chapter, which demand our particular attention. I. We are to obſerve, that the chief deſign of this Book, is to teach men prudence and underſtanding, and enable them to attain true wiſdom, which conſiſts in the fear of the Lord; that this is what all, young people eſpecially, ought chiefly to apply themſelves to; and that this heavenly wiſdom is attended with every bleſſing and advantage. Theſe conſiderations ſhould diſpoſe us to improve by the inſtructions contained in this Book. II. *Solomon* teaches us, that in order to arrive at true wiſdom, we ſhould ſhun wicked men, and thoſe who ſeek the hurt of their neighbours, leſt they ſhould draw us into evil by their ſolicitations, and by their examples, and we ſhould be involved in the miſeries that threaten them. III. We ought to hearken ſeriouſly to that wiſe and grave remonſtrance which Wiſdom, at the end of this chapter, addreſſes to ſinners, who, like fools, err from the right way. We here ſee very plainly, that God ſeeks ſinners, and makes them hear his voice; that he omits nothing to withdraw them from evil; that he is ready to give them his grace and Holy Spirit; that he does not forſake them, till after they have deſpiſed his counſels, and abuſed his patience; after which it is no longer time for them to have recourſe to his mercy. This ſets the goodneſs and juſtice of God in a clear light, and ſhews that men may be happy if they will; and that if they are not, their perdition proceeds from themſelves; and therefore, that they ought to hearken to the voice of God, and to the wholeſome inſtruc-

tions he gives them, and make good uſe of his long-ſuffering and proffers of mercy, before it be too late.

CHAP. II.

SOLOMON exhorts us, above all things, to labour for the attainment of true wiſdom. I. He ſhews, that it is the moſt valuable thing in the world, and that God gives it to thoſe who ſeek it ſincerely. II. He teaches us, that they who ſeek after wiſdom, and attain it, are filled with good, and are ſecured from temptation; but that they who depart from it to follow evil, and particularly ſuch as give themſelves up to impurity, hurry themſelves into the greateſt miſeries.

REFLECTIONS.

THE inſtructions which *Solomon* here gives us are, I. To hearken to the words of wiſdom, to be attentive to its counſels, to ſeek it with all our heart; that, in order to attain it, we are to beg it of God, who is the author and fountain of it; that it is not hard to attain, and that God gives it to all who ſincerely deſire it. II. This chapter ſets before us the advantages which accrue from the poſſeſſion of this divine wiſdom; it communicates the knowledge and prudence we ſtand in need of, procures peace and tranquility, preſerves from all evil, and particularly from the evil of temptation. By wiſdom we may avoid the ſnares of the wicked, need not fear the effects of their malice, nor are we in danger of periſhing with them. Laſtly, *Solomon* teaches us, that one of the advantages which wiſdom procures to mankind is, that it prevents them particularly from falling into uncleanneſs, and preſerves them from thoſe miſeries which men who

who follow ſenſuality, and the inordinate deſires of the fleſh, are expoſed to.

CHAP. III.

I. SOLOMON exhorts men to follow the inſtructions of wiſdom, to fear God, to truſt in him, to honour him, and to ſubmit to his corrections. II. That prince next deſcribes the excellence of wiſdom, and the great happineſs it procures. Laſtly, He exhorts us to do good to all, to hurt no body, and to walk uprightly.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this chapter we are to conſider in general the grave and affecting exhortations which *Solomon* here addreſſes to mankind, and his deſcription of the happineſs of thoſe who give themſelves up to the guidance and direction of wiſdom. On this head he informs us, that he who fears God, and departs from iniquity, is more happy than if he poſſeſſed all the treaſures, and every thing that the world eſteems at the higheſt rate; that wiſdom makes men enjoy the moſt exalted pleaſures, gives length of days, and is a ſpring of life and bleſſing; that with it we need fear no evil, but may walk ſecurely, riſing up and lying down without terror, having God always for our protector. Beſides this, *Solomon* here recommends many particular duties: ſuch are, I. To truſt in God, and not in our own wiſdom. II. To look up to God in all our ways, to fear him, and to depart from evil. III. To honour God by a holy and religious uſe of our ſubſtance, and of all the temporal advantages he confers on us. IV. To ſubmit to his corrections, remembring, that *whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth; even as a father the ſon in whom he delighteth.* V. Never to do an unjuſt action, or injure our neighbour,

or

or to go to law with him without reaſon or neceſſity; but, on the contrary, to delight in doing him good, never deferring our aſſiſtance when we have it in our power. The laſt duty is, not to envy the wicked; and to remember, that they who walk not uprightly are an abomination to the Lord, and that this curſe is in their houſes; whereas God always bleſſes them that live in uprightneſs.

CHAP. IV.

I. SOLOMON continues to exhort men to the ſtudy of wiſdom, and to ſhew that it brings true glory and happineſs to thoſe who apply themſelves to it. II. He warns men to ſhun the company of the wicked, and their evil examples, and to follow conſtantly the rules of piety and juſtice.

REFLECTIONS.

ALL, eſpecially young people, find in this chapter very wholeſome leſſons, and powerful motives to lay hold of the inſtructions which are given them, to form in them a habit of piety and virtue. *Solomon* exhorts us to eſteem and love wiſdom, and to labour above all things to acquire and keep it, aſſuring us that this makes men happy, and raiſes them to the higheſt pitch of glory. He teaches us moreover, that, in order to attain true wiſdom, it is highly neceſſary that we avoid the company and allurements of the wicked, ſince the ways they take lead to death. Laſtly, He charges us to attend to the divine inſtructions of wiſdom, to have them always before our eyes, to keep our heart from every thing that may corrupt or ſeduce it, and ſo to order our actions, our diſcourſes, and all our ways, that we may never turn away from the right path.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

THIS chapter contains exhortations to ſhun the irregular deſires of the fleſh, and to abſtain from uncleanneſs.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this chapter it muſt be remarked, that among other wholeſome advice given unto men, wiſdom recommends, in a very particular manner, to abhor uncleanneſs, and to ſhun perſons who live in debauchery. *Solomon* ſpeaks of the ſtrange woman, becauſe, as the nations bordering on the land of *Iſrael* lived very diſſolute lives, the *Iſraelites* were in great danger of being ſeduced by women coming from thoſe countries. He exhorts men very ſtrenuouſly, and young men particularly, to avoid all ſuch perſons: He ſets before them the folly and ſtupidity of thoſe who ſuffer themſelves to be ſeduced by ſenſual pleaſures, the miſeries they are expoſed to, and the injuries they do themſelves; reminding them, above all, that the actions of men are all expoſed to God's view; and that he examines all their ſteps. Theſe conſiderations, added to the many other motives which the Goſpel furniſhes us with, ought to inſpire us with the greateſt abhorrence of impurity. They teach us, that wiſdom and piety cannot dwell in a heart enſlaved by this paſſion; that we ought with all poſſible care to avoid the temptations, opportunities and objects, which might raiſe looſe deſires; and endeavour to be pure and chaſte, both in body and ſpirit.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

I. *SOLOMON* adviſes not to be too haſty to enter into ſuretiſhip for any one with a ſtranger. II. He exhorts us to avoid idleneſs, of which he repreſents the fatal conſequences; and to abhor malice, pride, cruelty, and lying. III. He charges us to abſtain from uncleanneſs, and to abhor thoſe ſins which it draws men into.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this chapter we are to conſider, I. That the advice which *Solomon* gives, not to become ſurety for another, does not mean, that we ſhould never be bound for any perſon whatever; but this prudent maxim means only, that no one ſhould raſhly engage for another; and that the *Iſraelites*, in particular, were to beware of being bound for others with ſtrangers. This was founded upon God's command, that the *Iſraelites* ſhould not have any particular dealings with the neighbouring nations, and becauſe ſuch ſuretiſhip occaſioned ſeveral inconveniencies. II. We ought to remember well what the Wiſe Man ſaith of idleneſs, and of the great miſchiefs that attend it; and, above all, we ought to avoid it, becauſe it corrupts the mind and the heart, and leads us into temptation and into ſin. III. *Solomon* has taught us, that God hates the proud and haughty, deceitful and cruel men; thoſe who contrive miſchief, who bear falſe witneſs, and ſow diviſion by evil reports. Since thoſe who are guilty of thoſe ſins are an abomination to the Lord, we ought utterly to abhor them, and remember that they would be much more abominable in us than they were in the *Jews*. IV. Young men are here exhorted to follow the good inſtructions of their fathers and mothers, and never to forget them. Laſtly,

ly, The curſes denounced in this and the following chapter, againſt adulterers and unclean perſons, prove, that the divine vengeance purſues them in a particular manner, and experience confirms the truth of theſe threatnings; but what the Goſpel ſays of theſe odious ſins, ſhould affect us ſtill more, as it leaves not the leaſt room to doubt but God will very ſeverely puniſh thoſe who give way to them.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter contains exhortations to follow the rules and maxims of wiſdom; and particularly, to ſtudy to be chaſte, and not to ſuffer ourſelves to be ſeduced by impure and immodeſt perſons.

REFLECTIONS.

THE frequent warnings of the Wiſe Man, from the beginning of this Book, to guard men againſt impurity, ſhew, that this ſin is utterly inconſiſtent with wiſdom and the fear of God; and that none but thoſe who are deſtitute of prudence and piety, can give any way to it; but that perſons truly wiſe avoid the ſnares of ſenſuality. We find in this chapter, that the impure and unclean are luxurious and impudent, diſſolute in their lives, and fond of pleaſures and finery. *Solomon* ſhews, that we cannot too ſtudiouſly avoid perſons of this character; and that thoſe who are drawn away by the luſts of the fleſh, are like brute beaſts which have no underſtanding, and haſten to their own deſtruction. Theſe warnings will have ſtill greater force, if we conſider, that beſides the miſeries which uncleanneſs expoſes men to in this life, it hurries them into a ſtate moſt fatal to the ſoul, and to their eternal welfare; and we ſhould attentively weigh the

the declarations of the Goſpel on this head, which are ſtill more expreſs than thoſe of *Solomon*.

CHAP. VIII.

I. THE Divine Wiſdom invites men to receive her inſtructions, and lay hold of the advantages which ſhe offers to them. II. She declares that ſhe was with God from the beginning; that by her he finiſhed all his works, and governs the world; that ſhe greatly bleſſes thoſe who follow her inſtructions; and that thoſe who reject her make themſelves miſerable.

REFLECTIONS.

WE here ſee, I. God's great goodneſs and particular care in calling all men, without exception, even ſinners, to receive inſtruction, in withdrawing them from the follies and errors of the world, and communicating to them true wiſdom. By thus preventing them, and doing every thing that is neceſſary to make them happy, God ſhews, that if they do not arrive at wiſdom and happineſs, it will be wholly their own fault. II. In this chapter we learn, that Divine Wiſdom is the moſt excellent thing in the world; that ſhe has always been with God; that the world was made by her; and that by her all things ſubſiſt in the order wherein we ſee them; that ſhe ſets up kings, and gives them the prudence they ſtand in need of; and that this wiſdom, which was with God before the creation, has been made manifeſt to render men happy. This was in an eſpecial manner fulfilled when the Son of God came into the world, and declared to men the doctrine of ſalvation: And this ought to induce us the more to make a good uſe of the inſtructions that

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are given us in the Goſpel. Laſtly, *Solomon* teaches us, that this heavenly wiſdom is communicated only to thoſe that love her, and deſire to receive her; that in order to find her, we need only to deſire and ſeek her; that ſhe cannot dwell with pride and diſorderly paſſions; that thoſe who hearken to her, are perfectly happy; but that ſuch as reject her wrong their own ſouls, and wilfully engage in the ways of death.

CHAP. IX.

WISDOM propoſes, under the ſimilitude of a feaſt, the good things ſhe beſtows upon men; exhorts them to receive her inſtructions, and warns them to avoid the temptations by which the fooliſh and abandoned woman draws away ſilly men.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three reflections to be made on this chapter: I. That ſince wiſdom invites men, with ſo much earneſtneſs and tenderneſs, to the enjoyment of her good things, we ought to improve her gracious invitations, renouncing the errors of the age, and ſincerely applying ourſelves to the ſtudy of true wiſdom, which conſiſts in the fear of God, and which will bring us to an eternity of happineſs and glory. II. It muſt be obſerved, that theſe wholeſome counſels of wiſdom are not received by all alike; that wiſe men hearken to them with pleaſure, and improve them; but that worldly and profane men make a mock at them, and only take occaſion from them to grow wicked. III. This chapter ſhews us, that it is one of the greateſt follies, and moſt dangerous errors, to ſuffer ourſelves to be allured by the charms of voluptuouſneſs; and that we cannot ſtand too much upon our guard againſt this temptation, ſince it is ſo fatal in its conſequences to thoſe who give way to it. This king

king *Solomon* himſelf is a melancholy example of, who was by women led into idolatry in his old age.

CHAP. X.

HERE the proverbs, or wiſe ſentences of *Solomon*, begin. Thoſe contained in this chapter, relate to the duty of children; to ill-gotten goods; to the happineſs of the righteous, and the unhappineſs of the wicked; to charity, and the love of peace; to wiſdom in diſcourſe; to the advantage of corrections; to ſlandering; to the fault of ſpeaking too much; to the benefit of converſing with wiſe men; to the deſtruction of the wicked; and to the firm and certain condition of the righteous.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections to be made on this chapter, are the following: That the greateſt happineſs of fathers and mothers is, to have wiſe children; that goods gotten by injuſtice, fraud, or extortion, never laſt long; that the bleſſing of God, which alone is true riches, always reſts upon the upright; that he who walks in integrity, walks ſecurely; but that they that depart from the right way, ſhall never proſper; that we ſhould avoid quarrels; and that charity covers other mens faults. Beſides this, we learn in this chapter, that we ought to be very prudent and diſcreet in diſcourſe; that it is a great fault to talk too much; that great talkers ſeldom fail of falling into lying, ſlandering, and other ſins. *Solomon* tells us likewiſe, that what the wicked fear, befals them; that at laſt they come to ruin; but that God grants the righteous what they deſire; that the fear of the Lord prolongs life, and renders it happy; that the hope of the righteous ſhall be gladneſs, and that they ſhall never be moved.

moved. Theſe are moſt certain truths, and maxims of very great uſe, which we ought to have continually before our eyes.

CHAP. XI.

THE ſubjects treated of in this chapter, are injuſtice and deceit, pride, integrity, the vanity of riches, the death of the wicked, the evils they occaſion in the world, and the good which upright men do in it; ſincerity and diſcretion; the fruits of righteouſneſs; the puniſhment of the wicked; the woman without virtue; covetouſneſs, uſury, and the folly of thoſe that truſt in their riches; and, laſtly, what befals good and bad men in this world.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we learn in this chapter is as follows: I. That God abhors deceit and injuſtice, and that we ought inviolably to adhere to integrity and uprightneſs, both in our words and actions. II. That pride is attended with ſhame, whereas humility leads to glory. III. That the wicked do much miſchief in the world, and when they die their hopes periſh; but that the righteous procure great happineſs to cities and ſtates, and that their happineſs is always immoveable. IV. That wiſe men avoid ſlander and tale-bearing, and are prudent in their diſcourſes; but that great evils happen both to the public and to private perſons, for want of prudence and good counſel. V. That, ſooner or later, the wicked will be puniſhed. VI. That a virtuous woman ought to be eſteemed; but a woman without virtue deſerves contempt. VII. That it is a great folly to love riches, and to put our truſt in them; and particularly, that thoſe that rejoice in times of ſcarcity and dearth, and take advantage from it to enrich themſelves, ſhall be accurſed. And laſtly, that if even the righteous man is expoſed to afflictions in this world, the ſinner ſhall not eſcape divine ven-

geance, but ſhall infalliby receive what he has deſerved.

CHAP. XII.

THIS chapter contains ſentences concerning correction, and the uſefulneſs of it; the divine bleſſing on good men, and the puniſhment of the wicked; concerning virtuous women, prudence, modeſty, humanity, ſloth, ſincerity, the proſperity of the righteous, and the unhappineſs of thoſe that give themſelves up to fraud and injuſtice.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to learn from hence, I. To love inſtruction and correction; and always to follow that which is right, ſince that procures the divine favour. II. What is here ſaid of the worth of a prudent and virtuous woman, warns Chriſtian women of their duty. III. *Solomon* charges us to live modeſtly, and not to affect grandeur and ſhew; to avoid cruelty and inhumanity; to be diligent and induſtrious; to abhor fraud and deceit, and never to wrong any one; to be prudent and ſincere in our words; to love peace and to procure it; and conſtantly to follow juſtice and the fear of God, that being the way that leads to life. Theſe are maxims of the greateſt importance, which we ought to practiſe, not only becauſe they may contribute to our happineſs in this life, but chiefly becauſe they are in themſelves right, and in keeping them we do what is acceptable to God, and procure his favour.

CHAP. XIII.

THE leſſons of inſtruction in this chapter, regard prudent children, ſincerity, and caution in our words and actions, diligence and labour, modeſty, pride, goods unjuſtly gotten, the advantage of hearing the inſtructions of the wiſe, good and bad company, the

the neceſſity of correcting children, and the bleſſing that attends good men.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains divers ſentences; the chief of which tend to inform us, how profitable it is to young people to be reproved and inſtructed; how important it is to be ſincere, and at the ſame time prudent and reſerved in our words; the great advantages of diligence and humility; and, on the contrary, the evils that proceed from ſloth, negligence, and pride; the curſe that follows goods unjuſtly gotten; the advantage we reap from the company of perſons fearing God, and the danger of frequenting the company of the wicked. Laſtly, *Solomon* teaches us, that God bleſſes the ſubſtance and poſterity of the upright; that thoſe who love their children ought to chaſtiſe them betimes; that the righteous ſhall ſee the accompliſhment of their wiſhes, and enjoy ſolid peace; but that miſery will be the portion of ſinners who depart from their duty.

CHAP. XIV.

THIS chapter treats about virtuous women, uprightneſs, prudence, falſe-witneſs, wiſdom, and the blindneſs of men in judging of themſelves; of falſe joy, credulity, wrath, liars; of imprudence; deſpiſing the poor, and reſpect paid to the rich; of compaſſion towards the miſerable; of ſincerity, the effects of the fear of God, of meekneſs, and of what occaſions the happineſs or unhappineſs of kingdoms.

REFLECTIONS.

AMONG the reflections which this chapter ſuggeſts, theſe particularly deſerve our attention. Here we learn, that women do much good or much harm in families; that the mark of a man who fears

God, is to walk in uprightneſs; that we ought always to ſpeak in truth, and with prudence, and to avoid inſincerity, lying and imprudence, in our diſcourſe; that men are apt to be deceived, and to think themſelves in the right way, when they are in the road of deſtruction; that the joy of the wicked ends in ſorrow and miſery; that credulity, as well as wrath and envy, make men fall into many faults; and that it is great wiſdom to be meek and moderate; that rich men are uſually honoured, but that poor and mean men are neglected and deſpiſed; that it is affronting God to deſpiſe the poor, but he that has compaſſion on them honours the Lord; that where the fear of God is, there is a ſpring of life, a firm aſſurance, and a preſervative againſt the ſnares of death. Laſtly, That juſtice and uprightneſs are the true glory of kings, and the greateſt ſecurity of ſtates; but, on the contrary, injuſtice becomes their ſhame and their miſery.

CHAP. XV.

THE Wiſe Man makes mention of meekneſs and prudence in our words; of the knowledge God has of the behaviour of all men; of the prayers of the righteous, and thoſe of the wicked; of the manner in which the wiſe and the fooliſh receive corrections; of joy and contentment of mind; of a mean eſtate; of wrath; of idleneſs; of wiſe children; of the deſtruction of the proud and unjuſt; and of the happineſs of men of integrity and humility.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we may gather, that meekneſs and diſcretion in words produce much good; that God knows and examines the conduct and the hearts of all, both good and bad men; that inſtructions and corrections are very uſeful; that wiſe men receive

receive them willingly; but that it is a ſure mark of folly and blindneſs not to be able to endure them; that God bleſſes the righteous and hears their prayers, but rejects thoſe of the wicked; that joy and content is the greateſt bleſſing of our lives, when joined with piety; that a little, with the fear of God, and with peace, is better than riches that bring trouble and wickedneſs along with them; that anger and idleneſs are attended with fatal conſequences; that wiſe children are a comfort to their parents; that God deſtroys the impious and the proud; that the family of thoſe who love diſhoneſt gain ſhall come to ruin; but that God proſpers thoſe that fear him, and do righteouſly, and walk humbly before him.

CHAP. XVI.

SOLOMON ſhews, that God knows and directs the actions and thoughts of men; that in him we ought to put our truſt; that he does every thing with wiſdom; that he forgives ſins; and that thoſe who turn to him and fear him, obtain his favour; that we ought to poſſeſs nothing unjuſtly; and that God hates pride and injuſtice: He treats likewiſe of the power and duty of kings, of the worth of wiſdom, of pride and humility, of prudence, of labour, of evil ſpeaking, of an honourable old age, of moderation, and of caſting of lots.

REFLECTIONS.

THE leſſons of inſtruction which the Wiſe Man here gives us, are, I. That God knows the hearts of men; that in him alone we ought to place our truſt; that he diſpoſes all things with profound wiſdom and perfect juſtice; and that the miſeries and calamities of the wicked are an effect of his juſtice. II. That from God we may obtain pardon of ſin and a reconciliation, provided we have recourſe to him by repentance, and fear him, and depart from evil. III.

That ſince *a little with righteouſneſs is better than great revenues without right*; and *pride goeth before deſtruction*; we cannot too ſtudiouſly avoid injuſtice, deceit, and haughtineſs. IV. *Solomon* exhorts thoſe that are exalted above others, to hate injuſtice, to love virtue, and upright men, and to make a good uſe of their authority. V. He exhorts us to apply ourſelves to the ſtudy of true wiſdom, and of the fear of God, ſince that is more worth than all the riches in the world; to be prudent, meek, moderate in our diſcourſe and actions; and to abſtain from ſlander, malice and wrath. VI. He teaches us, that a virtuous old age is very honourable, and that this bleſſing is uſually beſtowed by God on the godly. Laſtly, He declares, that God preſides over the lot, which plainly proves that he knows every thing; that he directs all things by his providence; and that nothing happens in the world but by his will.

CHAP. XVII.

THE ſentences of this chapter relate to concord, the fidelity of ſervants, the knowledge God has of mens hearts, the contempt of the poor, the bleſſing of families, the averſion that judges ought to have to lying, to taking bribes, and to injuſtice; others relate to reproofs, to folly, ingratitude, and quarrels; others ſpeak of the excellence of friendſhip, of the misfortune of having wicked children, of joy and ſorrow, of diſcretion in ſpeaking, and of ſilence.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn from this chapter, I. That there are three things neceſſary in order to make any family happy; namely, peace, faithful ſervants, and children brought up in virtue. II. That God ſearches and examines the hearts of men, which is a powerful motive

motive to godlineſs. III. That to deſpiſe the poor, and to rejoice at the evils which befals other men, is a ſin againſt God, and expoſes us to his wrath. IV. That magiſtrates and judges ought to have a ſtrong averſion againſt lying and deceit, againſt bribes and unrighteous judgments. V. That tale-bearers ſow diviſion; but that ſeaſonable reproofs are very uſeful. VI. That ungrateful perſons, and thoſe that return evil for good, ſhall never be bleſſed. VII. That quarrels ought to be carefully avoided. VIII. That one of the greateſt bleſſings we can enjoy in this world is to find true friends. IX. That ſince joy makes life happy, and ſorrow and vexation render it irkſome, we ought to apply ourſelves to the fear of God, which alone can give true contentment and ſatisfaction. Laſtly, That one of the chief effects of wiſdom is to ſpeak with diſcretion, and to know when to hold our tongues. Every one of us, according to our condition and circumſtances, ſhould meditate upon theſe precepts, and conform our actions to them.

CHAP. XVIII.

SOLOMON ſpeaks of peoples interfering with things which do not concern them; of prudent and grave diſcourſe; of reſpect of perſons in judgment; and of taking bribes. He talks likewiſe of quarrels, and the care which ought to be taken to put an end to them; of idleneſs and flattery, and of truſt in God; of pride, and the deſtruction that attends it; of raſh ſpeaking and judging; of the deſire of the wiſe to receive inſtruction; of law-ſuits; of the good and evil occaſioned by the tongue of virtuous women; of pride on account of riches; and of the care which ought to be taken to preſerve true friends.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter king *Solomon* teaches us to uſe a great deal of prudence in our words and actions; to ſeek the converſation of wiſe men, and improve by their inſtructions; to exerciſe juſtice; to put an end to diſputes, and procure peace with all poſſible care; not to hearken to flatterers, nor take pleaſure in their diſcourſe; and to ſhun idleneſs. The Wiſe Man informs us likewiſe, that the name of the Lord is a ſure refuge for the righteous; that when men are puffed up with pride, their ruin is not far off; that very great miſchiefs are occaſioned by raſh words; and, in general, that much good and evil proceed from the tongue. This chapter warns judges in particular not to reſpect perſons, not to take bribes, and to judge righteous judgment. Here we ſee, laſtly, that a virtuous and prudent woman, is one of the greateſt bleſſings God can grant in this life; and that we cannot ſet too great a value upon faithful and virtuous friends. When we read theſe ſeveral ſentences of *Solomon*, we ſhould not conſider them barely as prudent rules and maxims, which tend to make men happy in this life, and prevent many temporal inconveniences; but we ought to look upon them as means of pleaſing God, and procuring his love and approbation: And this ought to be our principal view in the obſervation of them.

CHAP. XIX.

THE ſentences of this chapter relate to the judgment which wiſe men form of others, on account of their poverty and riches, and the notions which the generality of mankind conceive of them on the ſame account: Other ſentences relate to imprudence, to falſe witneſſes, to the exaltation of unworthy perſons, to the care which ought to be taken in ſuppreſſing anger, and to the wrath of kings: Others repreſent

preſent the good and evil that is occaſioned by women, and by children; the reward of charitable perſons; the duty of correcting children; the evils ariſing from anger, idleneſs, and being without the fear of God; the advantages of piety; the puniſhment and miſeries which wicked men draw upon themſelves.

REFLECTIONS,

THE reflections we ſhould here make are, I. That a poor man, who walks in his integrity, is more valuable than a rich man without virtue; and therefore that we ought not to eſteem men becauſe they are rich, nor deſpiſe others for the meanneſs of their condition. II. That it is of great importance to behave with prudence in all things. III. That falſe witneſſes will not eſcape unpuniſhed. IV. That it is a great misfortune when mean and unworthy perſons are put in authority. V. That to know how to pardon injuries, and to moderate our anger, is the effect of great wiſdom. VI. That women and children contribute much to the happineſs or miſery of families; and that we muſt correct our children betimes, without being withholden by a falſe tenderneſs. This chapter teaches us likewiſe, that *he who gives to the poor, lends to the Lord, and God will pay him again*; that wrath and idleneſs are the occaſion of many evils; that the true way to be happy to the end of our lives, is to keep the commands of God, and to fear him; and laſtly, that the advantages of correction are great; that we ought to ſubmit to it willingly; and that thoſe who reject it, and laugh at inſtruction, lay up for themſelves the greateſt miſeries.

CHAP. XX.

SOME of the maxims contained in this chapter relate to exceſs in wine, to kings and their wrath, to law-ſuits and ſloth; others repreſent the praiſes given

given to virtue, the happineſs which the poſterity of the righteous enjoy, the corruption of men, God's averſion to injuſtice, the natural diſpoſition of children, and the price of wiſdom; others ſpeak of ſlanderers, of rebellious children, of revenge, of goods unjuſtly gotten, of ſacrilege, of breaking vows, of the ſecurity of ſtates, and the true glory of young and old.

REFLECTIONS.

SOLOMON here recommends to us to avoid drunkenneſs and intemperance, leſt we fall into quarrels and other diſorders, which are the conſequences of it; to reverence kings; to abſtain from lawſuits; not to give way to ſloth, nor to content ourſelves with praiſing virtue, but to practiſe it alſo. He teaches us, moreover, that the poſterity of good men are happy and bleſſed; that nobody can boaſt that he is altogether pure and free from ſin; that falſe weights, falſe meaſures, and all ſorts of fraud, are an abomination to the Lord. He ſhews us too, that the good or bad diſpoſition of men is diſcovered from their moſt tender age; and that therefore we ought to take a particular care of the education of children from the very beginning; that indulging ourſelves in too much ſleep is not conſiſtent with virtue; that true wiſdom is but ſeldom to be found; that we ſhould avoid the company of ſlanderers and tale-bearers; that a curſe attends diſobedient children, as well as ill-gotten riches; and that we ought never to return evil for evil. Laſtly, We may gather from hence, that it is a great ſin to commit ſacrilege, and not to perform our vows; that a righteous government is the happineſs of a nation; that young people ought to make a good uſe of the ſtrength and vigour of their age; and that old age is honourable, when it is accompanied with virtue.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

WE ſee in this chapter, that the hearts of kings, and of all men, are in the hands of God; and that nothing is more pleaſing to him than uprightneſs. *Solomon* ſpeaks here of pride, of riches acquired by injuſtice, of quarrelſome women, of hardneſs of heart towards the miſerable, of preſents, of the pleaſure which good men take in doing good, of the lovers of wine and good cheer, of the fruits of piety and wiſdom, of ſlothful perſons, of the covetous, of the worſhip which the wicked pay to God, of falſe witneſſes, and of the infinite power of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to make the following reflections: That the hearts of kings, and of all men, are in the hands of God, and that he is the judge of all their thoughts; that to do that which is right and juſt, is more acceptable to God than any ſacrifice; that he ſeverely puniſhes the proud; that thoſe who get riches by evil means labour for their own deſtruction; that women ſhould avoid wranglings and diſputes, and put on a ſpirit of meekneſs; and that he who is hard-hearted to the poor, ſhall not be heard in the day of his calamity. We may moreover from hence obſerve, that the righteous diſcharge their duty with pleaſure, but that it is very painful to the wicked; that it is dangerous to love wine and good cheer; that he who addicts himſelf to piety, and the ſtudy of wiſdom, finds life and glory; that covetous and ſlothful men torment themſelves with vain wiſhes; but that the righteous live contented, and love to give; that the prayers of the wicked are an abomination; and laſtly, that there is neither wiſdom nor counſel that is able to reſiſt God; and that he is the protector and deliverer of thoſe that truſt in him.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

THE ſentences we are now going to read are concerning a good reputation, the providence of God, meekneſs, piety, the education of children, and the neceſſity of correcting them betimes, charity, the deſtruction of the wicked, ſloth, the oppreſſion of the poor, the care we ſhould take to improve by inſtructions, the duty of princes and magiſtrates, anger, land-marks, and diligence.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we may draw the following inſtructions: That a good reputation is a bleſſing which we ought by all means to endeavour to acquire and to preſerve; particularly, that we may edify others by it; that God is equally the maker of the rich and poor; and that he has made a difference in the conditions of men, for the good of ſociety; but that he will judge them all; that meekneſs, and the fear of God, compoſe the whole happineſs of man; that it is extremely important to give children a good education, the fruits of which appear through their whole lives, and to correct them early; that God bleſſes thoſe who help the poor; that he takes in hand the cauſe of the oppreſſed, and makes thoſe who trample upon them fall into miſery; that it is a very advantageous and agreeable thing, to hear and follow the counſels of wiſdom, and altogether worthy of thoſe who govern the people; that we ſhould ſhun the company of angry people, and take care to do nothing diſhoneſt; and that labour and diligence procure great advantages to men. Theſe rules are of very great uſe in order to make men live happily in this world: But, above all, remember they are the indiſpenſible duties which religion and conſcience require of us, which ſhould be our chief motive to make them the rule of our conduct.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

IN this chapter the Wiſe Man teaches us to be ſober, not to deſire riches, nor accept a preſent from an envious or covetous man; to be prudent in our diſcourſes, and juſt in all our actions, particularly to the poor and fatherleſs; to correct our children; not to envy the wicked; to fly from drunkards and debauchees; to honour our father and mother, to ſearch after wiſdom and truth; and to avoid impurity and intemperance.

REFLECTIONS.

THE principal inſtructions we meet with in this chapter, are to be ſober, and not dainty in eating and drinking; not to deſire riches, but conſider that they are periſhing and tranſitory; to receive nothing from the covetous, or of thoſe that give with an evil heart; to be circumſpect in words; not to remove the bounds of mens poſſeſſions, nor to do any injury to the poor, remembering that they have a protector in heaven, who will plead their cauſe. The Wiſe Man next recommends the chaſtiſing of children, and not being too indulgent to them; never to envy the proſperity of the wicked, but to give ourſelves to the fear of the Lord; to avoid the company of drunkards and intemperate perſons, leſt we fall into the ſame miſery with them. Children ought to learn particularly from hence always to honour their parents, and not to deſpiſe them when they are old. *Solomon* again reminds us, that there is nothing we ought to attain or preſerve with greater care than truth and wiſdom. Laſtly, What we read at the end of this chapter, ſhould, in the moſt powerful manner, diſſuade us from drunkenneſs and impurity, not only for fear of the miſeries which theſe ſins expoſe men to in this world; but eſpecially on account of the evil of ſo doing

ing, and the puniſhment which theſe ſins will meet with from God in the life to come.

CHAP. XXIV.

THIS chapter contains ſentences concerning envy; the care of getting wiſdom and prudence; the obligation we are under to defend them who are oppreſſed; the fear of God's judgments: The divine protection of good men in affliction is likewiſe here treated of, together with the love of our enemies, the end of the ungodly, and the little reaſon we have to envy them; the fear of God; the honour due to kings; impartiality in judgments; œconomy, revenge and ſloth.

REFLECTIONS.

THE effect which the reading of this chapter ought to produce in us, is to teach us never to envy the wicked, nor join ourſelves to them; to make it our chief care to get wiſdom; to comfort and defend the afflicted; and to fear the judgment which God has threatned againſt thoſe who have no pity on them. The Wiſe Man next teaches us, that if the righteous often fall into affliction, the Lord delivers them; which is the meaning of this ſentence, *A juſt man falleth ſeven times, and riſeth up again:* For *Solomon* did not mean, that the moſt righteous man falls ſeven times a day into ſin, as ſeveral do falſly explain it. It appears from this chapter, that a wiſe man, and one that fears God, never rejoices at the evil that befals his enemies, nor is jealous at the proſperity of the wicked. He fears God, and honours his ſuperiors; he lives peaceably, without meddling in things that do not concern him; he has no reſpect to men in the exerciſe of juſtice, and renders to every one exactly what is his due; he never returns evil for evil,

and

and abſtains from revenge; he is prudent and induſtrious, and guards againſt idleneſs and ſloth, not only becauſe they are attended with poverty and many evils, but above all, becauſe they are an obſtacle to virtue, and corrupt the heart. The Goſpel preſcribes the ſame rules, and in a more perfect manner, which lays us under a ſtill greater obligation not to depart from them.

CHAP. XXV.

THE Wiſe Man makes ſeveral remarks on the greatneſs and duty of kings; on humility, quarrels, ſecrecy, words ſpoken in ſeaſon, and reproofs. He propoſes rules concerning liberality, meekneſs, temperance; the correſpondence we ought to maintain with our neighbours; the care we ſhould take to comfort the afflicted; the love of enemies, and the way to reſtrain ſlanderers. Laſtly, He ſpeaks of quarrelſome women, of the ill effects produced by anger, and by the righteous falling into ſin.

REFLECTIONS.

THAT which is ſaid of the greatneſs of kings, at the beginning of this chapter, ſhews, that they ought to be honoured; and, if they would be happy, they ſhould remove evil men from them. *Solomon* next teaches us, not to ſeek after vain-glory, but to be humble; to avoid diſputes; to keep ſecrets; to ſubmit to reproof with chearfulneſs; not to boaſt of any thing, eſpecially of what we have not; by mild ſpeeches to appeaſe thoſe who are enraged; and to be ſober and temperate. He adviſes us not to engage ourſelves too far in the affairs of the world, but to live in a religious retirement; and to behave ourſelves charitably and prudently towards the afflicted. He exhorts us to return good for evil, in thoſe words which St. *Paul* quotes, *Rom.* xii. *If thy enemy be hungry, give*

give him bread to eat; and if he be thirſty, give him water to drink; for thou ſhalt heap coals of fire upon his head; that is, by this means we ſhall gain our enemies, and deliver them from a great evil, and ſhall do a good work which God will reward; or if they ſtill continue to hate us, they will be utterly inexcuſable. Towards the end of this chapter, the Wiſe Man teaches us, that the way to ſilence ſlanderers is to diſcourage them, and let them know we take no delight in hearing them. He obſerves, that the fall of the righteous occaſions great evil, and is a dangerous example; and the wicked think, though very unreaſonably, that this gives them authority to ſin. Laſtly, He ſays it is a token of great weakneſs, not to be maſter of our own temper, nor to be able to reſiſt anger.

CHAP. XXVI.

THE ſentences in this chapter are upon the following ſubjects: The advancement of wicked men, raſh curſes, the evils that proceed from folly, and the way of replying to fools, that is, to ſuch as want wiſdom and virtue; their obſtinacy in ſin, their good opinion of themſelves; idleneſs, contention, the faithleſſneſs of thoſe who deceive their friends, quarrels, backbiting, diſſimulation and flattery.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections this chapter affords us are as follow: That honour and preferment are not fit for people without merit and without virtue; that curſes pronounced againſt any one, only harm the perſon that utters them; that thoſe who are void of wiſdom, fall into contempt and miſery, and occaſion many evils to others; that we ought to behave ourſelves diſcreetly towards ſuch perſons, and to anſwer them, or be ſilent, as prudence ſhall require. We may farther learn from hence, that the greateſt folly, and that which

which we are ſeldom cured of, is to have too high an opinion of ourſelves; that idleneſs is a vice that makes a man incapable of doing any good, or of hearkening to any advice; that it is great imprudence to concern ourſelves in the quarrels of others; that if there were no tale-bearers there would be no animoſities, and that they are the authors of many evils; that it is great perfidiouſneſs to deceive one's friend, and to pretend friendſhip, whilſt the heart is filled with hatred and ill deſigns, and that flattery ſhould be baniſhed from our converſation. Chriſtians ſhould abhor all theſe vices, as utterly unworthy of our Chriſtian calling; ſtudying meekneſs, charity, humility and ſincerity, in their words and actions.

CHAP. XXVII.

THIS chapter treats of the uncertainty of life and of all events; of the praiſes men give themſelves, of jealouſy, of reproofs, of the excellence and the duties of true friendſhip, of bad women, of the effects of praiſe and flattery, of incorrigible perſons, and of œconomy.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS ſentence of *Solomon*, *Boaſt not thyſelf of to-morrow, for thou knoweſt not what a day may bring forth*; warns us of the vanity of life, and the uncertainty of events, and therefore that it is great folly to depend upon the future. The Wiſe Man obſerves next, that to praiſe one's ſelf is not conſiſtent with prudence or humility; that we ought ſtudiouſly to avoid anger and paſſion; that thoſe who reprove us with ſincerity are our beſt friends; that on the contrary, thoſe who are flattering and inſincere, are our enemies; that true friends are a very great treaſure,

and that we ought never to forſake them. Women are taught in this chapter to avoid a ſharp and quarrelſome, and to be cloathed with a peaceable and quiet ſpirit. We likewiſe learn here, that there are ſome people ſo incorrigible, that neither warnings nor corrections can alter them. Laſtly, The rules about induſtry and œconomy which *Solomon* here gives us, ſhould be well obſerved, not only becauſe induſtry is profitable to this life, but chiefly becauſe application to ſome lawful buſineſs is a means of living innocently; and a plain and induſtrious life is a help to piety, and an inſtrument of ſalvation.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THIS chapter contains excellent ſentences upon the ſtate of a good and bad conſcience; about government, oppreſſion and integrity: Upon children who apply themſelves to piety and virtue, or depart from it; on juſtice, uſury, and the obſervation of God's commands; on the exaltation of good men, the fear of God, tyranny, diligence, ſincerity, and reſpect of perſons; on the miſeries which envious and covetous men are expoſed to; on reproof, and the ſin of children robbing their parents; and laſtly, on preſumption, and charity to the poor.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS ſentence, *The wicked flee when no man purſueth; and the righteous are bold as a lion*; deſerves to be well conſidered, as it ſhews, that an evil conſcience is generally in fear, whereas a good man is always calm and ſteady. This chapter teaches us farther, that God ſometimes puniſhes a people by their governors, therefore that good princes and magiſtrates

giſtrates are a peculiar bleſſing to a ſtate; that a poor and honeſt man is more worthy of eſteem, than a rich man without virtue; that wiſe children are a glory to families, but wicked children a diſgrace; that he who increaſes his goods by injuſtice and extortion, heaps up riches for others; that the Lord rejects the prayers of thoſe who tranſgreſs his law; that every body ought to be glad when the righteous are exalted, but that it is a great misfortune when the wicked bear rule. This ſentence deſerves our particular attention: *He that covereth his ſins, ſhall not proſper; but whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh them, ſhall have mercy:* And this other; *Happy is the man that feareth alway.* Theſe words teach us, that without confeſſion of ſins, there is no forgiveneſs to be obtained, and that the fear of God is a fountain of true happineſs. In this chapter we learn alſo, that idleneſs produces miſery; that juſtice is to be exerciſed without partiality; that envy and avarice only make men miſerable; that thoſe who reprove us are moſt deſerving of our love; that it is a great ſin in children to ſteal from their parents; that a good opinion of one's ſelf, is a ſign of extreme folly; and laſtly, that thoſe who give to the poor will never want, while the uncharitable are accurſed.

CHAP. XXIX.

THE Wiſe Man ſpeaks of thoſe that love not to be reproved; of the advancement of the righteous, and of the wicked; of the impure; of kings and governors, and of flatterers; of the good that wiſe men do to others, and of the evil occaſioned by the wicked; of the care which every one ſhould take to procure peace, and command his temper; of the puniſhment it is to any people to be deprived of God's

word; of the neceſſity of correcting ſervants; of men that are haſty and raſh in their words and actions, and laſtly, of anger, pride, and injuſtice.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to gather from this chapter is, that thoſe who will not bear reproof, are their own enemies; that the impure are expoſed to great miſeries; that a nation governed by good princes is very happy, but no leſs miſerable when its rulers and magiſtrates are lovers of bribes, and have under them men without virtue; that flattery is a ſnare which every wiſe man ſhould ſhun; that wiſe and pious men are very uſeful in the world, but that wicked men do much miſchief in it, and are enemies to the righteous. This chapter teaches us alſo, that it is wiſe and prudent to ſhun diſputes, to calm our paſſions and refrain anger; that we ought to undertake to defend good men; that children, duly corrected, are a joy to their parents; that people without inſtruction and the fear of God are corrupted and deſerve our pity; that we ought to behave with prudence towards our ſervants; that we ought never to engage ourſelves in the ſociety of wicked men; and that thoſe who partake with them, and make advantage of their injuſtice, become partners of their crimes. Laſtly, *Solomon* teaches us, that anger hurries men to the commiſſion of many ſins; that pride brings men low, while humility exalts them; and that the ſureſt way to be always in a ſettled condition, is to truſt in God, and to walk uprightly.

CHAP. XXX.

IN this chapter *Agar* confeſſes man's meanneſs and the majeſty of God, and prays him to give him neither poverty nor riches.

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REFLECTIONS.

WE are chiefly to obſerve from this chapter theſe two things: I. That what is here ſaid of man's meanneſs and God's omnipotence, ſhould produce in us a lively ſenſe of our own weakneſs, of the Divine Majeſty, and our dependence on God. II. That a middling ſtation in life is the moſt happy and deſirable; which *Agar* has expreſſed in this beautiful prayer: *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me.*

CHAP. XXXI.

THIS chapter may be divided into two parts; the firſt of which contains inſtructions, which the mother of king *Lemuel* (ſuppoſed to be *Solomon*) gave him to reſtrain him from ſenſuality, from unjuſt wars, and from drunkenneſs; and to engage him to protect the weak, and to govern juſtly. And the ſecond part contains the praiſes of a virtuous woman.

REFLECTIONS.

THE inſtructions which are contained in the firſt part of this chapter, relate chiefly to kings and governors, and tend to reſtrain them from impurity, from unjuſt wars, and from intemperance; and to inſpire them with ſentiments of equity and juſtice; yet there is none who is not bound to follow theſe good inſtructions, and to ſtudy chaſtity, ſobriety, and the love of peace and juſtice. The ſecond part of this chapter teaches us, that the qualities which render women praiſe-worthy, are diligence and induſtry, good houſewifery, love of their huſbands and children, charity to the poor, diſcretion and wiſdom in their diſcourſe, and above all the fear of God. Here we learn, that the life of the women

in thoſe times, even of thoſe that were rich, was plain and induſtrious; and that they laboured with their hands to ſupply the neceſſities of their families. However, we muſt not ſuppoſe, that what is ſaid in this chapter regards only the maxims and duties of economy. Religion requires of women the ſame duties and qualities which *Solomon* praiſes in perſons of that ſex, and which recommend them in the ſight of God. This St. *Paul* ſhews, when he praiſes women who take care of their children, who ſtay at home and guide the houſe, who exerciſe charity, and who practiſe with care all manner of good works; and when he blames, on the other hand, thoſe that are idle, tattlers and buſy-bodies, wandering about from houſe to houſe. Wherefore Chriſtian women ought to give particular attention to what is ſaid in this place.

The end of the Book of PROVERBS.

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THE

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

BRITISH MUSEUM

ARGUMENT.

The design of king Solomon *in this book, is to expose the vanity of the world, and of human life; and to shew, that the only way to be happy, is to fear God, and to keep his commandments.*

CHAP. I.

I. SOLOMON teaches, that every thing in this world is vain and uncertain; and particularly, that the knowledge of things here below, and the labours of men, cannot give them content of mind. II. He confirms this by his own experience.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE whole Book of *Eccleſiaſtes*, and particularly this chapter, tends to inſtruct us in the vanity and inconſtancy of the world, and of our own lives; and to teach us, that every thing here is in a continual change, and that the pains which men take

for the things below cannot make them happy. This truth we ought not to be leſs convinced of than *Solomon* was; nay, the vanity of the world ſhould even more evidently appear to thoſe who enjoy the light of the Goſpel. Wiſdom therefore, and our duty, require us continually to remember, that *all is vanity*; which will be an effectual remedy againſt the love of the world, and a ſubjection to our paſſions. This meditation ſhould likewiſe engage us to bleſs God, that we have in the knowledge and fear of him a remedy againſt this vanity, to which all things are ſubject. And ſince the pains which men take to get poſſeſſion of the advantages of this life, and to acquire the wiſdom of this world, is nothing but trouble and folly; prudence requires us to apply ourſelves to a more uſeful and neceſſary taſk, and labour to get true wiſdom, which conſiſts in the fear of God, and which can only impart to us ſolid content and perfect happineſs in the courſe of this life, and even after death.

CHAP. II.

I. *SOLOMON* ſhews, by his own experience, the vanity of thoſe things which men moſt highly eſteem in this world. He ſays, that after he had endeavoured to ſatisfy himſelf with pleaſures, with buildings, riches and magnificence, he found that all was nothing but vanity. II. He adds, that he had made the ſame judgment of the conduct of men, and of their labour in acquiring worldly wiſdom and prudence, or in heaping up riches.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought to take great notice of what is ſaid in this chapter. We here find a great king, after he had lived in pleaſures, magnificence, and plenty,

plenty, acknowledging, that all is nothing but vanity. The example of *Solomon* ſhould make us own the worthleſſneſs of riches, pleaſures, honours, and of all that men purſue upon earth, and the folly of ſetting our hearts upon them. But what *Jeſus Chriſt* in the Goſpel ſays upon this occaſion, ſhould yet more ſtrongly convince you of this truth. *Solomon*'s reflections on the trifling advantages attending that wiſdom which is confined to the things of this life, deſerve to be well weighed; and ſo do his remarks on the folly of thoſe perſons, who weary themſelves in heaping up riches; and when they die, leave them to others, and ſometimes to perſons they do not know. Theſe conſiderations ſhould lead us to ſeek true wiſdom, and teach us to moderate our deſires after the good things of this world, and direct us what uſe to make of them; and to avoid that attachment of heart, and thoſe exceſſive cares, that render a man miſerable in this life, and rob him of peace of mind here, and of the happineſs of the life to come.

CHAP. III.

I. SOLOMON ſhews, that all things in this world have their ſeaſon, and are liable to change; and concludes from thence that it is the beſt thing to be content, and to apply ourſelves to well-doing. II. He ſpeaks of the unrighteous judgments pronounced by magiſtrates. Laſtly, He obſerves, that all men are mortal; and that upon this account there is no difference, with reſpect to the body, between them and the brute beaſts.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT *Solomon* teaches us concerning the inconſtancy, and the continual change of worldly things, and of the life of man, ſhould convince

vince us that ſolid happineſs is not to be found in things fleeting and tranſitory. II. This ſhould excite us to act wiſely, to make a good uſe of time and of the opportunities that offer of procuring this happineſs. III. Since God preſides over the changes which things here below are ſubject to, and manifeſts in them his wiſdom, juſtice and goodneſs; it is our duty as well as happineſs to ſubmit in all things to his Providence, and to events, as he is pleaſed to diſpenſe them. IV. This chapter likewiſe teaches us, that whatever confuſion and diſorder we diſcover in the world, God knows every thing that is done in it; that he examines particularly the behaviour of judges; and that if they commit any injuſtice, he will call them to account for it. Laſtly, It is to be conſidered, that if *Solomon* ſays men die as the beaſts do, he only ſays it in relation to the death of the body; for he teaches us in this very chapter, that *God ſhall judge the righteous and the wicked*; *and that there is a time appointed for every purpoſe, and for every work*: And he ſays expreſsly, at the end of this Book, *that when the duſt returns to the earth as it was, the ſpirit ſhall return to God who gave it*; and that *God ſhall bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* The conſequence therefore to be drawn from this chapter is, that we ought to uſe the things of this preſent life with thankfulneſs and moderation, but apply ourſelves, above all things, to fear and pleaſe God.

CHAP. IV.

SOLOMON deſcribes the innocent under oppreſſion; the envy that one man bears to another; the idleneſs of ſome, and the pains which others take to get riches; the advantages of ſociety, and the in-

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conveniencies of being friendleſs and alone; and laſtly, he ſpeaks of men exalted to rule over others.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE Wiſe Man's obſervation in this chapter, that the innocent are often oppreſſed, and comfortleſs, is a proof of the vanity of the world; but it proves that there is a God, who will render to every one according to his works; and therefore, that we muſt not judge men to be happy or miſerable by what befals them in this world. II. The envy of one man againſt another is a farther proof of the vanity of this life; but this paſſion ought to be baniſhed from the heart, ſince it only ſerves to torment us unprofitably, and beſides is inconſiſtent with charity to our neighbour, and with the ſubmiſſion we owe to the will of God. III. *Solomon* teaches us, that it is a great folly to harraſs and torment ourſelves in getting riches together, ſince we do not know oftentimes into whoſe hands they will fall. IV. He obſerves that it is very advantageous, and very agreeable to be united in friendſhip, provided it be with virtuous perſons. V. We here learn, that wiſdom is preferable to all worldly goods; and that a poor and wiſe man is more excellent than kings that want wiſdom. Laſtly, *Solomon* obſerves, that men are attached only to thoſe from whom they hope to receive; and that they forſake great men when they have no more to expect of them. This ſhews, that there is much vanity in the judgments of men, and in worldly greatneſs, and therefore we are not to depend upon happineſs from theſe things.

CHAP. V.

SOLOMON here gives advice, I. Concerning raſhneſs and hypocriſy in divine ſervice, vows and

and unrighteous judgments. II. He repreſents the folly of covetous men, and the vanity of riches; and laſtly, he directs us what uſe to make of the good things which God hath given us.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us learn from this chapter, I. To preſent ourſelves before God with great reſpect, eſpecially when we enter into places ſet apart for religious worſhip, and to take heed to our thoughts and words, when we appear before him. II. That it is an indiſpenſible duty exactly to perform the vows we make; and that it is much better never to make than to break them. III. That if princes and magiſtrates do not exerciſe juſtice, we muſt believe that there is a God in heaven that ſees it, and will judge them for it. IV. That a fondneſs for riches and pomp will neither prolong life, nor make a man more happy; that, on the contrary, they produce more trouble and anxiety; that men who get their living by labour, enjoy more ſweetneſs and repoſe than thoſe who poſſeſs great eſtates; that the more men have, the more their cares increaſe; that the rich cannot enjoy their own riches; that they die like other men, without enjoying any ſolid ſatisfaction; and that they know not what will become of their eſtates after their death. Laſtly, We muſt remember, that when *Solomon* ſays, *It is good and comely for a man to eat, and to drink, and to enjoy what he hath*; his meaning is not that we ſhould give way to ſenſuality and pleaſures. We cannot aſcribe ſuch a thought to him, if we conſider what is ſaid in this chapter, of the reverence with which we ought to preſent ourſelves before God, of vows, of the judgment which God will paſs on thoſe who judge others, and of the joy which he ſheds abroad in the hearts of good men. His meaning is only this, that when God grants us wealth, we ought

ought to be content with it, to receive it, and poſſeſs it as his gracious gift, and uſe it with ſobriety and gratitude, but never to place our happineſs in it. Theſe are *Solomon*'s real ſentiments; and theſe are particularly the ſentiments which the Goſpel inſpires.

CHAP. VI.

THIS chapter repreſents the vanity and miſery of thoſe, who having received riches from God, know not how to make a good uſe of them, and are never eaſy nor contented.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections which *Solomon* makes in this chapter, are very proper to moderate the heat of mens purſuits after earthly goods. The vanity of their labours appears, not only in their not knowing how to enjoy the good things which they ſo eagerly purſue; but chiefly in this, that they are deprived of the greateſt bleſſing of life, which is eaſe and a contented ſpirit, and cannot ſecure themſelves any thing for the future. The Goſpel gives us ſtill clearer directions on this head, when we are told, that *they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts. That the love of money is the root of all evil; and that godlineſs with content is great gain.*

CHAP. VII.

I. THIS chapter treats of meditating on death; of reproof, and the uſe that ſhould be made of it; of patience, of the worth of wiſdom, of the manner of behaving in proſperity and adverſity; of what happens to the righteous and wicked in this world;

world; of the inconveniencies which men bring upon themſelves by want of moderation and equity, and by preſuming upon themſelves; and of the advantages attending the fear of God. II. *Solomon* adds, that all men are liable to ſin, and that we muſt not buſily enquire what people ſay of us, nor make ourſelves uneaſy about it. Laſtly, He ſpeaks of women void of virtue, of the evils occaſioned by them, and of the ſtate in which God created man at the beginning.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we have ſeveral excellent inſtructions: I. That it is very neceſſary to think upon death; and that it is more uſeful to mourn than to give ourſelves up to mirth. II. That wiſe men hearken with pleaſure to thoſe that reprove them, and are mild and gentle in their diſcourſe, and in their whole behaviour. III. That riches are a bleſſing, only when they are attended with wiſdom and virtue. IV. That God does all things with perfect juſtice, that it is he who viſits men with proſperity and adverſity, and that we ſhould make a good uſe of both. V. That we ought not to be ſtaggered or offended, if we ſee the wicked live happily and long, nor if the righteous ſuffer. Theſe words, *Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyſelf over-wiſe*, muſt not be underſtood as a caution not to be too good or too wiſe, ſince we can never be wiſe and good enough, nor uſe too many endeavours to become ſo; but *Solomon* ſpeaks this againſt thoſe, who, when inſiſting upon their own right, or paſſing judgment upon others, proceed with the utmoſt rigour and ſeverity, not obſerving the rules of moderation and equity, and are ſo preſumptuous and conceited, that they want to direct every thing, and buſily meddle with what no ways concerns them. The Wiſe Man teaches us likewiſe, that all men are liable

liable to fall into ſome fault, and therefore they ought to bear one with another. He adviſes us not to be inquiſitive, nor make ourſelves uneaſy about any thing that others may ſay of us; as this would be apt to rob us of our peace and tranquility, and tempt us to reſentment and raſh judgments. What is ſaid of women, towards the end of this chapter, ſhould be well underſtood. As the ſcripture often ſpeaks of women illuſtrious for their virtues, and *Solomon* himſelf praiſes ſuch, *Prov.* xii. 4.—xviii. 23.—xxxi. 10. he could not mean, that a virtuous woman was no where to be found: There is, in this reſpect, no difference between the two ſexes. But *Solomon*'s meaning is, that having ſearched out the reaſon of all the wickedneſs that paſſes in the world, ver. 25. he had found, that there was nothing more wicked and dangerous than a diſorderly woman, ſuch as he deſcribes, ver. 26. that her malice and artifice are ſcarce to be conceived; nor can they who have ſuffered themſelves to be ſurpriſed by her, without the utmoſt difficulty eſcape her ſnares. *Solomon* therefore does not ſpeak of women in general, but of ſuch as he had been deſcribing. One reaſon, no doubt, which made this king talk thus, was his being himſelf ſeduced by women. See 1 *Kings* xi. Laſtly, *Solomon* teaches us, that God has made man upright, but that he has wilfully corrupted himſelf; from whence it follows, that we ought not to aſcribe man's depravity to God, ſince it is wholly owing to himſelf.

CHAP. VIII.

THE inſtructions contained in this chapter relate to the excellence of wiſdom, to the reſpect due to kings, to prudence, to the uncertainty of events, and the certainty of death; others repreſent the abuſe

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men make of God's patience, the preſent condition of good and bad men, and the uſe we ought to make of the advantages of life.

REFLECTIONS.

THE principal inſtructions which the Wiſe Man gives us in this chapter are; that wiſdom is man's true happineſs and pleaſure; that we ſhould pay to kings the reverence that is due to them; that one of the chief duties of wiſdom is, to make a right uſe of time and opportunity in all things, the neglect of which expoſes men to many evils; that men know not what is to happen to them; that events, and even our own lives, are not in our power; but that death is unavoidable, both by the wicked and the good, which is a powerful motive to patience and godlineſs. We are moreover taught in this chapter, that ſinners uſually harden themſelves, becauſe God bears with them, and defers their puniſhment; but that, nevertheleſs, they will receive ſooner or later what they have deſerved; that if the righteous are unhappy in this world, and wicked men happy, this is an argument of the vanity of things here below; but that God will have it ſo to try good men, and to invite the wicked to repentance; and that at laſt he will render to both according to their works. Laſtly, We muſt take notice, that when *Solomon* ſays, he had *valued pleaſure above all things*, he ſpeaks of reaſonable pleaſures, which proceed from a lawful and moderate uſe of the goods that God has given us, which have nothing in them irregular and contrary to piety.

CHAP. IX.

WE learn from this chapter, I. That good and bad men are ſubject to the ſame accidents; that

that the dead have no ſhare in what paſſes upon the earth, nor can they any longer enjoy the good things of this life, and therefore we ought to uſe them while we may. II. That men are not the diſpoſers of events. Laſtly, That wiſdom is of a very great price, though wiſe men are often deſpiſed.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may obſerve upon this chapter, I. That though good and bad events are common to all men, as *Solomon* acquaints us; yet juſt men, and their actions are, nevertheleſs, in the hands of God, who will judge both the righteous and the wicked. II. When we are told by *Solomon*, "That the dead have no longer any ſhare in what paſſes in this world, and that their love and hatred are both at an end; and therefore, that we ought to eat our bread with joy all the days of our life;" his deſign is, that we ſhould improve the advantages of life, and make a wiſe uſe of what we have in poſſeſſion: but let us not abuſe this notion, and imagine we are at full liberty to give ourſelves up to worldly joys and pleaſures, and to ſay with the ungodly, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* III. *Solomon* teaches us, that wiſdom and ſtrength are profitable upon many occaſions; but that, however, we are not the maſters of contingencies; and that we often fall into misfortunes, without being able to foreſee or prevent them. This teaches us never to rely upon our own ſtrength, prudence, and addreſs, and to remember always that we depend upon providence. IV. We may here obſerve, that though wiſdom is very advantageous, and worthy the higheſt eſteem, yet it is often deſpiſed, eſpecially in poor men; but that this is a very partial judgment; and that we ought to eſteem wiſe and virtuous people, without having reſpect to their appearance.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter treats of the faults committed by wiſe men; of the benefits of wiſdom, and the evils occaſioned by folly; of the exaltation of unworthy perſons, and of the miſeries attending nations, where the governors are unfit to govern, being young, and addicted to pleaſures and intemperance. Here is likewiſe mention made of prudence and raſhneſs in diſcourſe, of ſloth, and of the reſpect that is due to great men.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are four principal obſervations to be made on this chapter: I. That the faults committed by thoſe who paſs for wiſe men are of great conſequence, becauſe they are a bad example, and give ſcandal to religion. This ſhould teach virtuous perſons to take heed to their behaviour, but does not authorize any body to imitate them in the faults they commit. II. That in all things men ſhould behave with prudence, and neither do nor ſay any thing raſhly and out of time. By this means we may avoid many inconveniencies, and many ſins, which men fall into for want of reflecting on their words and actions. III. That when people of mean extraction, and at the ſame time deſtitute of wiſdom and virtue, are exalted to honours, they generally occaſion many evils. IV. *Solomon* has taught us, that people and ſtates are very much to be pitied, when their princes and magiſtrates have not that wiſdom and underſtanding which is neceſſary; when they are young, and without experience; or if they are addicted to drunkenneſs, gluttony, and fond of pleaſures; but, on the contrary, that a land is happy which is governed by perſons that are wiſe, ſober, and worthy to command. Upon which we muſt obſerve, that the faults of men in authority

thority ſhould not hinder us from reſpecting them; but that pious kings and upright magiſtrates are worthy of double honour.

CHAP. XI.

THE wiſe man makes ſeveral reflections with regard to the uſe we ought to make of worldly goods. He ſhews, that we ſhould follow the order which God has eſtabliſhed, to procure the neceſſaries of life; remembring, however, that all things depend upon the providence of God, and that the things of this life are vain and tranſitory.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to learn from this chapter, I. To conform to the appointed rules of providence in providing the neceſſaries of life, and in our uſe of things temporal. II. That the works of God are wonderful, and above our comprehenſion; but that it becomes us to rely upon that adorable Providence which provides for all, and in the mean time enjoy the bleſſings it affords us, without placing our happineſs in them.

CHAP. XII.

THIS chapter has three parts. I. *Solomon* exhorts young people to fear God, before old age ſurprizes them, and death takes them out of the world. II. He deſcribes the infirmities of old age, and ſays, that it ends in death. Laſtly, He concludes this book with ſhewing, that the deſign of all he had here ſaid is, to teach men to acknowledge the vanity of this world, and to fear God.

REFLECTIONS.

YOUNG people ought to make a good uſe of the grave and preſſing exhortations, which the wiſe man gives them in this chapter; and learn from thence,

thence, I. That it is of the greateſt importance to ſhun the deſires of youth, and eſpecially luxury and pleaſures; to remember their Creator whilſt they are young, and to fear his judgment, before they are deprived of the opportunity of diſcharging theſe duties; leſt, if they follow the inclinations of their heart, and give themſelves up to the pleaſures of the world, they diſcover their miſtake when it is too late to find a remedy. II. The deſcription *Solomon* here gives us of the infirmities of old age, expoſes the vanity of this life; but it ſhould lead us chiefly to obſerve, that ſince man decays in ſuch a manner, and his body is weakned and conſumed by old age, age muſt be no very fit time to glorify God in, or work out our ſalvation, when we have neglected to do it before; and that therefore we ought to labour therein before our end approaches, and whilſt we have time and ſtrength for the work. III. Theſe words, *Then ſhall the duſt return to the earth as it was, and the ſpirit ſhall return unto God who gave it*, are a clear proof that the ſoul is immortal, and dies not with the body; and therefore they deſerve to be read with peculiar attention. The concluſion of this Book of *Eccleſiaſtes* is likewiſe very remarkable, wherein *Solomon* declares, that *the concluſion of the whole matter*, and the deſign of all he has ſaid is, to *fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God ſhall bring every work into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* Theſe laſt words may ſerve to explain all that we read in this book; as they are in truth the end and the ſum of all religion, and of all the leſſons we meet with in the ſacred books.

The End of the Book of ECCLESIASTES.

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END *of* VOL. I.